Journal of Emerging Trends in Educational Research and Policy Studies (JETERAPS) 9(2): 45-55
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jeteraps.scholarlinkresearch.com

The Implementation of Financial Incentive for Rural School Teachers in Namibia: Trends, Challenges and Prospects

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Abstract
The purpose of this study was to explain the influence of financial incentive on the performance of learners at rural schools, as this performance relates to the motivation of teachers. A literature study and an empirical investigation were conducted. An interpretivism research paradigm informed the methodology of the empirical study. A mixed-methods research approach, which relied on a qualitative research design, included a research sample of 28 teachers, 5 school principals and 2 education officials. Data were collected through document analysis and interviews with participants. Key findings revealed that financial incentive has contributed little to the performance of learners in rural schools. The fact that rural schools were not properly categorised according to environmental challenges resulted in teachers not receiving realistic financial incentive. Teachers were therefore not motivated by financial incentive only, but by other factors relating to being tuned to nature in rural areas, being exposed to lower living costs and enjoying accommodating school leadership and community care. The study concluded that the implementation of financial incentive did not optimally served its purpose of motivating teachers to locate to rural schools and subsequently improving learner performance. The study was significant in uncovering the fact that financial incentive did not make potential impact on teacher motivation and learner performance in rural Namibian schools, thus prompting relevant interventions by education planners.A revisiting of the implementation of financial incentive is recommended in order to negate shortcomings and enhance the potential impact of financial incentive to contribute to improved learner performance as steered by motivated teachers.

Keywords: financial incentive, learner performance, learning, motivation, rural areas, rural schools, teacher motivation, teaching

INTRODUCTION

The increasing spending by governments on education over time and the relatively decline in learning achievements by rural school learners, has led education policy makers to increasingly consider reforms for improving the effectiveness of public spending on education (Engin-Demir & Taneri 2011, p.92; Litheko 2012, p.2). Among a number of reforms that has been considered, the idea of introducing financial incentive for teachers in rural schools has received favourable attention by education stakeholders worldwide (Mulkeen & Chen 2008, p.22; Roland 2011, p.3-4).

Financial incentive has been considered to motivate teachers to improve their teaching practices which in turn positively impact the learners' performance (Lavy 2009, p.1979; Muralidharan & Sundararaman 2011, p.39). In this regard, the Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture in Namibia (MoEAC) has attempted to implement financial incentive for qualified teachers in rural schools, in order to improve learner performance at rural areas (Kavishe 2012, p.1). The implementation of financial incentive for rural teachers in Namibia in 2010, was premised on the fact learners at rural schools were performing poorly because qualified and professional teachers were not motivated to teach at schools located in rural areas (Namwandi 2014, p.1; NANTU 2011, p.6). As a result, rural schools were taught by more unqualified teachers and few qualified teachers which then led to low poor learner performance at rural schools (Hardre & Sullivan 2008, p. 471; Moon 2007, p.3). Hence, the idea of implementing financial incentive by different governments worldwide, was meant to attract and retain teachers to improve learner performance at rural schools (Glazerman, Mckie & Carey 2009, p.1).

In Namibia, as a case study, only professionally qualified teachers were meant to receive financial incentive, as the MoEAC in Namibia wanted to attract and retain qualified teachers at rural schools to improve learner performance. The general perception was that, teachers' motivation was closely associated with monetary rewards. The implementation of financial incentive was divided into three categories, according to which schools were classified and on

which basis qualified teachers were to receive the different amount of money on top of their monthly salaries, as financial incentive amount. Schools were categorised according to remoteness, in terms of how far away the school was from the nearest town, as well as the availability of basic services and facilities (Iikela 2011, p.1). The categories were; Category A, Category B and Category C.

In Category A, each qualified teacher was receiving an amount of N$1 750.00 per month. This category was regarded an 'extreme hardship' category. This was when the school was over 100 km from a main town, there was no electricity and water and there were no health and social recreational facilities. In Category B, each qualified teacher was receiving an amount of N$1150.00 per month. This category was regarded as a 'moderate hardship' category. This was when there was water and electricity at the school as well as access to health facilities and telecommunications and the main town was less than 100km away. In Category C, each qualified teacher was receiving an amount of N$750.00 per month. This category was regarded as the 'least hardship' category. This was when the nearest town was less than 50 km away, and electricity and water were available. Health facilities, shops and transport were available and accessible.

While the idea of a financial incentive sounds best in attracting and retaining qualified teachers at rural schools (Guarino, Santibanez, Daley & Brewer 2004, p.5, Figlio 2002, p.686), the evidence on the effectiveness of this program was very limited, mixed and not convincing (Glewwe, Ilias & Kremer 2003, p.5; Lavy 2009, p.1980; Vegas 2007, p.220). From the researcher's observation as a teacher, more than four years after the implementation of financial incentive for qualified teachers were implemented in Namibia, the influence of financial incentive on learner performance in Namibia was not evident. Therefore, the focus of this study was to explain the influence of financial incentive on learner performance as this performance relates to qualified teachers' motivation and retention in rural Namibian schools.

Statement of the Problem

The importance of qualified and motivated teachers in providing quality teaching cannot be over-emphasised. Motivated teachers informs quality teaching and good learner performance. Poor school effectiveness and lack of improvement in learner performance among Namibian rural schools have been attributed to a lack of qualified teachers. In an attempt to address this problem, the Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture in Namibia, implemented a financial incentive to attract, motivate and retain qualified teachers in rural schools for the sake of improved learner performance.

Since the implementation of financial incentive in Namibia, there was no empirical evidence detailing the influence of financial incentive on the performance of learners at rural schools, as this performance relates to the motivation of teachers. The researcher has been in the teaching fraternity for nine years, being a teacher at both a rural-based and urban-based high schools. The researcher observed that the performance of learners in schools taught did not always depend on whether teachers were receiving financial incentive or not. Furthermore, the researcher's experience as a teacher, led to question whether financial incentive was indeed the main motivator for attracting qualified teachers to rural schools to improve learner performance. Hence, the purpose of this study was to explain the influence of financial incentive on the performance of learners at rural schools, as this performance relates to the motivation of teachers. As no significant empirical evidence of improved learner performance in Namibian rural schools exists more than five years after the implementation of financial incentive, this study sought to address this gap.

Significance of the Study

Namibia's vision to become a developed nation is dependent on an effective education system by means of which the skilled labour is provided that is required to improve productivity and a knowledge-driven economy (Government of the Republic of Namibia 2005, p.2). This calls for a motivated teaching force to ensure improved learner performance especially in rural areas as approximately 70% of the African population resides in the rural areas (Adedeji & Olaniyan 2011, p.16). This study was therefore significant in contributing new insights for improving teacher motivation and learner performance at schools in rural areas. The findings of the study would also inform an efficient education budget spending based on the economic returns. In addition, this study was significant insofar as it uncovers a host of other potential factors that motivated rural school teachers. This would ensure a balanced nurturing of motivating factors in pursuit of motivating teachers while improving learner performance in rural schools.

METHODOLOGY

The methodology used for this study is explained as follow.

Research Design

This study endeavour to establish the influence of financial incentive on learner performance, as this performance relates to teacher motivation. To achieve this goal, a qualitative case study was conducted. A case study allows an exploration from multiple perspectives of the complexity and uniqueness of a particular project or programme functioning in a real-life context, and provide specific and contextually rich data (Simons 2009, p.21). In case studies, the

aim is to provide an explicit context of a phenomenon, out of which new insights can be developed (Moriarty 2011, p.16). Insights from the case study can then be transferred to other situations with similar conditions. In this study, an explanatory, single case study design was relevant as the study was characterised by 'how' and 'why' research questions, address more contextual issues, and sought to explain why certain behaviors have occurred, their causes and effects, in a particular setting (Yin 2009, p.24).

Sampling and Participants

Participants consisted of five school principals, two education officials and twenty eight teachers. Participants were sampled from two education offices and five rural schools of Omusati region, Namibia. Participants were sampled using non-probability sampling techniques. In non-probability sampling, the researcher has no way of forecasting or guaranteeing that each element of the population will be represented in the sample and some members of the population have little or no chance of being sampled (Leedy & Omrod 2005, p.206). In non-probability sampling, the researcher has the prerogative to judge the population and produce the sample. School principal participants were sampled by means of purposive sampling. Purposive sampling involves researchers handpicking the participants to be included in the sample on the basis of the researcher's judgments of participants' typicality to the phenomenon of study (Chiromo 2009, p.18). As school principals were in charge of schools as learning institutions in rural areas, they were better positioned to articulate rural-based issues and how they influenced teaching and learning at their schools, in relation to financial incentive.

Teacher participants and two education officials were sampled using snowballing. Snow ball sampling is a type of non-probability sampling technique where the sampled subjects indicate other subjects who could provide rich information for the study (Chiromo 2009, p.18). Teachers who have been in the teaching fraternity in a rural setting for a considerable period of time, were well-positioned to enumerate the conditions that distorted successful teaching and learning in rural areas, and how financial incentive have influenced these conditions. Similarly, long-serving education officials who discharged education administration and management in Omusati region, could equally contribute meaningfully to the research intentions.

Data Collection Methods

Data was collected by means of a literature study and an empirical investigation. The researcher reviewed existing literature pertaining to financial incentive, rural communities, rural schools as well as teaching and learning in rural areas to obtain answers to the research questions. To complement the data from the literature study, an empirical investigation was commissioned using document analysis, individual and focus group interviews. The researcher, guided by an analysis guide, analysed applicable documents in the office of the school principal at every selected school, before started interviewing the school principal. Individual interviews were conducted with school principals at their respective schools, as well as with two education officials at their respective offices. During the presentation of data, the anonymity of school principals were safeguarded by using pseudonyms such as Principal one (P1), Principal two (P2), and so on. Schools were referred to as School A, School B, and so on. The pseudonyms used for education officials were C1 and R1 respectively. Their offices were referred to as Office A and Office B.

Semi-structured focus group interviews were conducted with teachers, in a focus group of six teachers. The semi-structured nature of the interviews allowed the researcher to generate a considerable amount of data about the participants' opinions and experiences with regard to the phenomenon of study (Moriarty 2011, p.8). Focus group participation was voluntary, and all members of the focus group were given background information about the study, that the Regional Director has granted permission, the aim of the focus group interview, and anonymity and confidentiality surrounding the research. In conducting the focus group interviews, researcher followed an interview guide and tape-recorded the responses from the participants. For anonymity of teacher participants, the researcher used pseudonyms as Teacher one (T1), Teacher two, (T2), and so on, to relate specific data to participants during presentation.

As focus group interviewing explores the views of diverse groups of people, the researcher was able to unpack different perspectives within the group in relation to the topic of discussion (Choy 2014, p.102). In addition, asking a group of people to respond jointly to common questions can yield varied and detailed data on the same topic (Dudwick, Kuehnast, Jones & Woolcock 2006, p.3). The questions for both the individual and focus group interviews were open-ended questions, in order to provide opportunities for both the researcher and participants to discuss certain topics in more detail (Hancock 2002, p.9).The open-ended nature of the questions provided opportunities for the participants to provide as much information as possible regarding the phenomenon of study and for the researcher to prompt participants for a deeper understanding of the subject that was studied (Yauch & Steudel 2003, p.472).

The data that was collected with individual and focus group interviewing was analysed according to the themes and categories which emerged as a result of a process of inductive categorisation (Atieno 2009, p.16; Johnson & Onwuegbuzie 2004, p.16). The data that was collected by document analysis was analysed statistically and presented as frequencies and percentages. The data was then interpreted in relation to the existing literature to answer the postulated research questions. The interpretation and discussion made reference to the percentages, as well as the use of the verbatim excerpts from the interview data because they carry authenticity and a rich density of meaning for the research intentions.

Data Collection Procedures

The research sites consisted of five schools and two Education Offices. All the research sites belongs to Omusati Region, Education Directorate. The Regional Director gave approval to conduct the proposed study. Then researcher then visited research sitesand explained the research intentions to the participants, and obtained informed consent from the participants. After an appointment schedule was agreed with the participants, the researcher started collecting data by starting with rural schools. Sequentially, the researcher first analysed the applicable documents in the office of the principals, and then interviewed school principals before rounding off with focus group interviews with sampled teachers at every selected school. When all participants were engaged at all schools, the researcher then visited the two education offices, which were in different towns and interviewed the sampled education officials.

Trustworthiness of Findings

The trustworthiness of the research findings were established by triangulation and member checking.

Triangulation

Various scholars have defined triangulation as the use of multiple methods to data collection in order to enable these methods to complement each other and to confirm that the data present common codes and themes (Kahn & Best 2006, p.269, Creswell 2014, p.13, Leedy & Omrod 2005, p.99). According to Guba (1981, p.75) the use of different methods in a study, compensates for their individual limitations and exploits their respective benefits. This study employed data triangulation as one of the types of triangulation.

Data triangulation involves using different sources of information in order to increase the trustworthiness of the findings of the study (Creswell 2014, p.259). It involves using different sources of research instruments, such as interviews, focus group discussions or participant observation that utilises different informants to enhance the quality of the data from different source (Anney 2014, p.277). The researcher has used different data collection methods, which included individual interviews with school principals and education officials, as well as focus group interviews with teacher participants. These multiple methods all produced data that complemented each other in addressing the research intentions (Leedy & Omrod 2005).

Member Checking

Member checking seeks to establish whether the participants agree with what the researcher have written about the data they provided during the inquiry (Ary et al 2010, p.500). Member checks requires that the data interpretations and discussions are continuously tested as they are derived with participants from whom the data was solicited (Guba 1981, p.85). The aim is for researcher to solicit feedback and share his or her interpretations of the data with the participants in order to help clear up miscommunication, identify inaccuracies and help obtain additional useful data.

The researcher went back to the participants and shared the interpretations and discussions of the findings with them. This was meant to establish common grounds on the research outcomes with participants. This iterative process ensured that the findings that was presented, were a true and genuine reflection of the data collected from the participants. To ascertain the credibility of the data collected from document analysis, the data was discussed with the school principals of the specific research site to ensure that the data has been captured and recorded accurately. This discussion allowed for the countering of data misrepresentation by the researcher and keep out error and bias.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

The trends, challenges and prospects associated with the implementation of financial incentive are discussed concurrently under the following categories.

Reception

As informed by interpretivism, which underpinned the paradigmatic framework for this study, the feelings and personal views of the participants on the implementation and influence of financial incentive in retaining teachers in desolated rural areas were considered. It was clear that participants welcomed financial incentive in improving learner performance at rural areas by recruiting and retaining qualified teachers. Even though the implementation of financial incentive was well-received, participants emphasised the virtues of retaining qualified staff, which could be improved with an increased financial incentive amount and with a correct classification of schools according to the degree of hardships and remoteness.

Participants felt that the implementation of financial incentive *"was something good and it brought some good changes to rural schools because it helped keeping qualified teachers at rural schools, although there were some challenges"* (P5).The implementation of financial incentive was *"a very good move by the government but the incentive was not enough and schools were not properly classified"*(T21). Participants welcomed this implementation and regarded it as a motivation to remain in rural areas and to teach as dedicatedly as possible. The implementation of financial incentive so far *"was good and really attracted teachers to apply for teaching posts at rural schools and to work hard"* (C1). With emphasis on attraction of qualified teachers to rural schools, the view was raised that incentive should have included housing in addition to financial assistance as proper housing for teaching staff in rural areas were not adequate. The implementation of financial incentive was*"a good move, but I think the government needed to do more to attract teachers to rural schools. They needed to build better facilities such as housing"* (T3).

The shortfall with regard to financial incentive that relates to a lack of proper housing also included aspects such as urban life attractiveness and the desolation of rural remoteness. Some participants felt that *"the implementation of financial incentive did not make an impact as most teachers were still interested in working in urban schools. They only resorted to rural schools in most cases when they could not find a job in town"*(T6).

As expressed by the participants, the general trend with the implementation of financial incentive was that, it a positive move by the Government of the Republic of Namibia. Recipients were enjoying the financial incentives, however, with reservations. The implementation was characterised by challenges, which influenced its effectiveness in achieving outcomes relating to the retention of qualified teachers in rural areas. Challenges raised by the participants that could have promoted the effectiveness of financial incentive, related to lack of proper housing for rural school teachers, lack of rural life attractiveness, desolation of rural remoteness, low financial incentive amount and improper classification of schools. Addressing these challenges in the interests of rural schools and their teachers, would promote better prospects and effectiveness of the financial incentive initiative.

Scope of Application

The financial incentive was implemented as a motivational strategy to attract qualified teachers to locate and remain at rural schools, while improving the performance of learners at these schools. Because of this intent, financial incentive was exclusively intended for qualified teachers. From the interviews with participants, it became clear that the earlier implementation model of giving financial incentive exclusively to qualified teachers, was altered to an inclusive model. The latter model of implementation was that, every teachers at rural schools, regardless of whether they were qualified or not, should receive financial incentive. As a result, almost teachers at every schools sampled, were receiving financial incentive with a few exemption of teachers who were employed on a temporary basis or recently employed.

The inclusive implementation of financial incentive was necessitated by teachers' trade unions that got involved and established that *"all staff members at schools should receive financial incentive because they were suffering the same hardships"* (P5). Participants welcomed the all-inclusive model of paying financial incentive to all qualified teachers, unqualified teachers and non-teaching staff members at rural schools. *"It was quite unfair to give only financial incentive to qualified teachers, because when a person joined the staff, they needed to receive financial incentive"* (P4).

Participants felt that it was *"good for unqualified teachers to get the financial incentive because they were doing the same job as qualified teachers. Apart from ensuring fairness, it was essential in helping unqualified teachers come and help schools in rural communities for the sake of increased performance"* (P2).The decision to change the financial incentive to an all-inclusive endeavour for teaching and non-teaching staff was motivated by fairness engendering motivated input especially as this fairness and input relate to unqualified teachers. Participants were convinced that *"providing unqualified teachers with financial incentive encouraged them to work hard* (P3).

Most of the participants agreed that it was essential to provide unqualified teachers with financial incentive as they were doing the same work as the qualified teachers relating to teaching and learning actions. Because both qualified and unqualified teachers were involved in teaching, they were entitled to the same benefits relating to financial incentive. However, the focus should be on teaching effectiveness. Both qualified and unqualified teachers were involved in teaching. The question was; were their outcomes the same as these outcomes pertained to the influence of teacher training on learner performance? 'Surface teaching' by both qualified and unqualified teachers, cannot be used to justify the fact that both qualified and unqualified teachers should receive financial incentive, because 'surface teaching' must prompt 'deep teaching', a competency gained through intensive professional training, that unqualified teachers have missed.

With the above rationale in mind, the researcher prompted participants on the efficiency of granting financial incentive to qualified teachers exclusively, in order to motivate unqualified teachers to improve their qualifications. Responses from participants varied from being positive about the motivational impact of such a gesture on qualification improvement to debilitated nihilism relating to not being qualified now or in the future. *"Unqualified teachers were going to take that move as courage to upgrade their qualifications to become qualified and receive financial incentive"* (P3).On the other side, *"together with the non-teaching staff, unqualified teachers were going to be demotivated because they were the one receiving low payment and again omitted by the financial incentive amount"*(P5).

The fact that unqualified teachers were receiving financial incentive resulted in low motivation for them to upgrade their qualifications, jeopardising the main intent underpinning the original idea with financial incentive namely, to attract and retain qualified teachers to rural schools. Embedded in this rationale, was the assumption that unqualified teachers were going to be motivated by the fact that they were not receiving financial incentive to obtain their qualifications to receive financial incentive like their qualified counterparts. The ultimate goal with financial incentive was to have a well-established, qualified teaching staff at rural schools. The offering of financial incentive to unqualified teachers, and by extension, the non-teaching staff, has therefore defeated the original intention with financial incentive, namely to ensure proper provisioning of qualified teachers at desolated rural schools.

Suspension

After the financial incentive was implemented and run for a period of time, it was stopped and teachers were not receiving financial incentive. There were different views from the participants regarding the rationale for the suspension of the financial incentive, but the majority agreed that it pertained to ineffective application. The financial incentive were *"not awarded fairly to schools which brought many disparities. Unions got involved and there was a stoppage in the issuing of financial incentive"* (T26). These disparities led to disagreements between stakeholders, which necessitated the financial incentive to be stopped for a while to rectify the disparities. Some participants were of the opinion that the suspension of the financial incentive did not have an influence on teacher retention or learner performance at rural schools. *"There was a time may be two years back when the financial incentive were cut-off and teachers were not receiving financial incentive for a period of time, but there was no difference in teachers locating to rural schools and learner performance"* (R1).It becomes clear that the implementation of financial incentive was suspended. However, this suspension did not deter teachers from locating to rural areas and maintaining their standard of performance. Operations at rural schools continued as usual, the same way they have been progressing before and during the implementation and suspension of the financial incentive.

Categorisation

While participants welcomed the implementation of the financial incentive to rural schools, participants were of the view that their schools were not properly categorised. The feeling prevailed that teachers at the selected rural schools did not receive the realistic amount of financial incentive due to skewed categorisation. *"I think we were supposed to be in a different category, because we are far from the main town. The place that they have considered close to us has just been proclaimed as a settlement and not a town yet. So we still have to travel to town to access services"* (P4). Participants felt that there are things that needs attention when comes to the implementation of financial incentive, especially when comes to the classification of schools in categories. *"The issue of hardships was not fairly looked at, as you would find one school close to the road and one school was far, yet these schools were grouped in one category and receiving the same amount of financial incentive. It was something that needed to be reviewed"*(P3).

The classification of schools into categories were supposed to be done according to the criteria of remoteness, namely, how far away the school was from the nearest town and the availability of basic services and facilities. Participants emphasised that these criteria were not applied appropriately to justify hardships in real terms. Categories needed to be reviewed to ensure schools were placed in their rightful categories with teachers receiving their realistic financial incentive. The main problem with wrong categorising seemed to be of a human nature due to the lack of objective application of the criteria for categorising schools. There was a feeling among participants that certain education offices were more involved in categorising schools as they saw it fit, rather than complying with the stipulated criteria for school classification. Categorisation was not really based on remoteness, but sometimes *"it was the Circuit Office which decided which school should get which category"* (T1).

It was clear that the categorising of schools according to distance from locations of accessing resources, caused ambiguous interpretation. A main point of confusion related to the misinterpretation of the Circuit Office as a location for resource replenishment. Schools were not appropriately categorised, *"because some schools were categorised on the distance between the school and the Circuit Office, yetthis office has nothing to offer in terms of*

basic needs and essential services required for human existence" (T25).Misinterpretation of category specifications was also experienced with regard to school locality to road networks and nearby settlements which did not provide essential services required by teachers. Teachers were still required to travel long distances to the main town to access essential services and goods. Participants agreed that the distance between the school and the main town or places that provided essential goods and services sufficiently be considered as main determinant for categorising schools.

The improper categorisation of schools had an influence on teacher provisioning and the kind of provisioning at schools in rural areas. Teachers who were appointed to rural schools or who were considering to be transferred between rural schools had considered the category of the school to make their final decision. The implication was that wrong categorisation caused teacher shortages, as one participant observed that *"this year we were having many vacant posts and two teachers declined because the category of incentive for the school was not inviting. This negatively affected learning as learners would go for a long period without a teacher"*(T12). Another participant claimed that *"teachers did not get motivated because the schools were not categorised appropriately, seeing that some schools that were close to towns were placed in one category with schools that were far from town"* (T14).Due to this improper categorisation of schools, *"teachers especially those with high qualification were not attracted to rural schools and mostly only teachers with low qualifications were moving to rural schools"* (T15).

Participants also raised concerns about school categorisation that did not consider teacher efforts with learner performance in standardised national school examinations. The skewed classification demotivated teachers because *"most of those schools that were in the categories for the highest amount of financial incentive, were just primary schools, having grade 1-4, and not schools whose learners sat for national examinations, grade 10 and grade 12"*(T7).This implied that teachers who received the highest amount of financial incentive, were not teachers whose performance was measured by national examinations, whereas for those teachers whose performance was measured by national examinations, got low financial incentive amount and they were not motivated.

The fact that the performance of schools was usually evaluated in terms of their performances in national examinations, teachers teaching learners who wrote national examinations experienced excessive stress due to media exposure. When learner performance was not adequate, teachers were blamed without considering the circumstances under which teaching happens. For this reason, the fact that schools receiving the highest amount of financial incentive were mostly primary schools whose learner performances were not measured by standardised national examinations, was considered unjust and unfair. Teachers teaching learners who wrote standardised national examination had to work hard with little resources available to them to ensure good learner performance. The fact that schools were not properly categorised in terms of remoteness and grade levels, was considered unfair, influencing teacher motivation negatively.

Insufficient amount

In addition to skewed categorisation, participants felt that financial incentive amount allocated to them was inadequate in relation to the challenges they experienced by teaching in a desolated rural areas. The implementation of financial incentive was a good move by government but *"the financial incentive was not enough and thus not attracted a lot of qualified teachers to come to rural areas due to poor working conditions, that the financial incentive cannot contain"* (T21).

Apart from pointing out that assistance was needed with proper housing, participants also quantified bad road conditions and a lack of electricity and proper recreational facilities as desolated rural-area-challenges for which substantive financial incentive amount could have compensated. Participants asserted that the financial amount was very little as it was *"not enough to service cars as a result of bad road conditions"* (T25). Whatever the challenges, it was clear that participants considered the amount received as financial incentive as significantly insufficient and not encouraging them to remain in rural areas. *"The money that we are receiving is peanuts and this is discouraging us. Some of us are still planning to move to urban areas because the money does not really motivate us, it is not enough"* (T7).The above view concurs with Bennel (2004, p.17) and Lingam (2012, p.2) that most teachers prefer to work in urban areas as working in rural schools was too demanding given the adverse working conditions.

The fact that the participants regarded the financial incentive as peanuts evidenced the paucity of the financial incentive on their lives and their preparedness to locate to urban areas if and when possible. Participant teachers revealed that despite their level of performance, the reward they were receiving as financial incentive, was not motivating them as the amount was little compared to the performance they were achieving and the challenges they were facing at rural schools. The inadequacy of the financial incentive amount resulted in teachers leaving schools in desolated rural areas to locate to

other schools, where the working environment in terms of proper housing and better road networks were better.

Participants emphasised the devaluation of their financial incentive amount, as the financial incentive did not appear as a separate package in addition to teachers' existing monthly salaries, but formed part of teachers' gross salaries. As a result, teachers were prone to an increased tax deduction as *"by adding this financial incentive to a teacher's salary, it movedsome teachers to the next tax bracket, which made a teacher pay more tax and left with less money"* (T6).

It is clear that teachers were exposed to double negative effects of financial incentive in rural areas, namely, wrong categorising of schools and increased tax deduction. The wrong categorising of schools deprived teachers to receive their realistic amount for financial incentive. In addition, increased tax deduction did not make teachers feel any addition on top of their usually salaries and thus did not left with extra amount to help deal with the challenges teachers were facing at rural schools. Hence, financial incentive did not positively influenced the motivation of teachers at rural schools in as much as schools were not properly categorised and financial incentive amount was little and subjected to taxation.

Standard of Education

The study established that learner performance has remainedpoor regardless of the financial incentive. Some participants admitted a slight improvement in learner performance, however, considered comprehensively this improvement was negligible. Long serving rural teachers indicated that *"before financial incentive was introduced, we had been teaching in the rural areas and the performance has been the same despite teachers receiving financial incentive"* (T7).This implied that *"financial incentive did not add any positive change according to my observation* (P3). *There was a time when the payment of financial incentive was suspended*. However *"teacher recruitment and retention, as well as learner performance had just remained the same, fluctuating as it has been, and any performance standard was dependent on the target we have set for the region"* (R1). In addition "*the performance that existed has been there before financial incentive was introduced, due to self-motivation"* and not because of the extrinsic motivation of financial incentive, because *"the money that we were getting as financial incentive were not enough to cater for our needs"* (T20).

Although the majority of participants emphasised that the performance of their learners has remained poor regardless of a financial incentive, some acknowledged a noticeable improvement, which was attributed to the presence of young teachers who have recently graduated from universities. One participant observed that *"there was a change in learner performance. In the past, our school used to fall under the 'schools of concern'. But ever since the school received young graduates, the school performance improved*(P2).It was clear that because these young teachers recently graduated from teacher training institutions, they were better equipped methodologically and pedagogically, to teach effectively and helped improving learner performance. However, *"the challenge remains that learner performance has not improved significantly as anticipated, especially in subjects like English, Mathematics and Physical Science"*(T15).This was because *"the supply of teachers for these critical subject areas was very scarce"* (P5).

This study established that the standard of learner performance in rural schools had been in existence before the implementation of financial incentive. Attributing school performance to financial incentive was therefore not acknowledging other factors such as target setting, teachers intrinsic motivation, leadership and support services, that have influenced learner performance positively. These were some of the factors that participants felt motivated and demotivated teachers regardless of the payment of financial incentive.

It became evident that an improvement in learner performance was recorded in the era of the implementation of a financial incentive. However, the improvement was not as significant as was anticipated. For many selected schools, learner performance has remained the same, regardless of the implementation of financial incentive. Where an improvement in learner performance was experienced, this improvement could not be attributed to financial incentive alone, but also to other factors relating to teachers 'intrinsic motivation, leadership and support services. It was clear that the influence of financial incentive on learner performance in rural areas was minimal.

This finding concurs with literature evidence that financial incentive have failed to attract and retain qualified teachers at rural areas for improved learner performance (Bush, Bell & Middlewood 2010, p.138; Glazerman, Mckie & Carey 2009, p.39, Vegas 2005, p.21). There were a host of other factors that supposed to be implemented alongside the financial incentive in order to make it a success, through teacher motivation and improved learner performance. These factors related to proper teachers' housing, provision of instructional resources and better working conditions to counteract desolated rural conditions, and make rural areas attractive places to work at.

Limitations of the Study

This study focused on the motivation of teachers teaching at schools in rural communities. Given the rural context of the research, the researcher encountered challenges caused by weather conditions, especially that data collection was planned for the first school semester of the 2017 school year. However, during the first school semester, the research sites were flooded and class attendance was suspended. The classes resumed only towards the end of the first semester when the water level subsidised. The limitation caused by the suspension of school was that; too little time was left for teachers to cover all the content they were meant to have presented by the end of the first semester.

When schools re-opened for the second semester, teachers were burdened with extensive teaching and administrative load. The result was that some teachers withdrew from participating in the study owing to their extensive workload relating to outstanding lesson preparations and presentations. The withdrawal of some of the initially selected participants may have had a hampering influence on the completeness and authenticity of data collected.

In addition to the suspension of school attendance, the permission to conduct research was granted on condition that the research should not interfere with the normal operations at the research sites. As a result, all focus group interviews were conducted after 14h00 when the school day has ended. The limitation related to this arrangement pertains to participants that were exhausted due to their teaching loads. The researcher observed that some participants were exhausted when they entered the focus group interview venue. This exhaustion might have had an influence on the quality of the data provided by the participants during the inquiry.

CONCLUSION

It became evident that one of the challenges facing education systems worldwide is the motivation of qualified teachers to teach at rural schools, because rural schools are characterised by adverse living and working conditions. This motivated qualified teachers to prefer living and working at urban schools where conditions were more comfortable.Teacher motivation in rural schools was essential, given the adverse living and working conditions these teachers were exposed to. Various education leaders have implemented numerous strategies to motivate teachers and retain them in rural schools. Amongst other strategies, the idea of implementing the financial incentive received prominence by many governments. The effectiveness with the implementation of this initiative is mixed and not convincing, hence probing further research into the field.

This study sought to establish the influence of financial incentive on learner performance at rural schools, as this performance was related to the motivation of qualified teachers. The study established that participants welcomed the implementation of financial incentive to boost their motivation and learner performance. Even though the financial incentive was implemented to be paid exclusively to qualified teachers, the implementation model was now changed to an inclusive one, in which case every staff members in rural schools, including qualified teachers, unqualified teachers and non-teaching staff were receiving financial incentive amount.

This study submits that the default payment of financial incentive to every staff members has defeated the original intent of the initiative and qualified teachers were no longer regarding it as an initiative relative to them. This move have negatively affected the motivation level of qualified teachers to increase performance level, as well as the motivation of unqualified teachers to upgrade their qualifications. The study also established that the payment of financial incentive was suspended. However, trends in teachers' recruitment and retention as well as learner performance at rural schools remained as usual, despite the suspension of financial incentive. Participants expressed disappointment that rural schools were not properly categorised, resulting in teachers not receiving realistic financial incentive amount, corresponding with their performance level and the hardships they were facing at rural schools.

The improper categorisation of rural schools were exacerbated by the insufficient amount of financial incentive, as the amount was too little to cater for teachers' needs and motivate them to remain with rural schools' teaching. As the intent for the implementation of financial incentive was to improve learner performance as a result of teacher motivation, the study established that the implementation of financial incentive has little influence on learner performance and teacher motivation. This was because after the implementation of financial incentive, rural schools' performance has been the same as before the implementation of financial incentive, fluctuating between different years. Any improvement in performance was not attributed to financial incentive alone, but to a host of factors that motivated teachers such as support services, rural school leadership and target-setting.

To increase the effectiveness of financial incentive on teacher motivation and learner performance in rural schools, it was recommended that schools should be properly categorised in order for teachers to receive realistic financial incentive amount matching with the challenges they faced at rural schools. The financial

incentive amount should be increased, and where possible exempted from taxation, so that it was able to cater for the needs of teachers at rural schools. To improve the standard of education through improved teacher motivation for improved learner performance, numerous factors should be considered for implementation alongside the financial incentive. Attention should be paid to adequate teachers' proper housing, sufficient infrastructures and instructional resources to realise an improved working conditions for rural schools teachers and make rural areas better and enriching workplaces.

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