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## **Livelihood and survival strategies among Gweru urban teachers and their implications on pupils' performance in the current Zimbabwe's flopping economy**

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**Abstract.** Currently, teachers' salaries in Zimbabwe are insufficient to sustain the harsh economic situation yet teachers seem to be meeting their monthly livelihood demands. A study to explore different survival strategies engaged by teachers under this current flopping economy was conducted in the Gweru urban. A total of 55 participants were randomly selected from five different schools. Questionnaires and in-depth interviews were used to collect data. Descriptive statistics and Chi-Square test for association (SPSS version 21) were used to analyse the data. Findings revealed that teachers have adopted 15 survival strategies to augment their meagre salaries. Over 50% of the teachers indicated that borrowing money from banks/microfinance institutions, conducting extra lessons, poultry production, cross border trading, part-time teaching at private schools, production of horticultural produce and selling of goods (maputi "dried corn", sweets, peanut butter, snacks etc...) were pillars to their survival in this collapsing economy. Gender influenced the adoption of cross border trading ( $\chi^2 = 4.558$ ;  $p < 0.05$ ) and hair dressing ( $\chi^2 = 10.102$ ;  $p < 0.005$ ). Delivery of extra lesson was significantly associated with job title ( $\chi^2 = 5.026$ ;  $p < 0.05$ ) constituting 70% teachers and 20% headmasters. It was observed that teachers with higher qualifications had a greater chances of being hired as part time private tutors in private schools. A greater proportion of the respondents (70.91%) agreed that venturing into these survival strategies impacted seriously on pupils' overall performance. Thus teachers are recommended to balance their profession and private business to ensure that pupils' performance is not compromised.

**Keywords.** Flopping economy, survival strategies, teachers, school, livelihood

### **Introduction**

There have been a negative change in Zimbabwe economy for the past fifteen years and this has affected salaries of teachers which has been deteriorating in the past few years. The salaries are insecure and have an impact on their lifestyle and as a result teachers are trying to find ways to sustain their living standard. This have made Zimbabwean teachers to be viewed as "less productive", "ill motivated", "less efficient", "unfriendly to pupils", "absent" or even "corrupt", "demotivated" as a result of unfair salaries (Scoones, 2008).

Zimbabwe's education sector was once considered one of the finest in Southern Africa, but the economy has collapsed in recent years. Current salaries for teachers are not enough to sustain the harsh economic situation in the country yet teachers are found in classroom

regardless of low salaries (Noko, 2011). The teaching profession is becoming unattractive yet again during this period where everyone including teachers are being paid in Bond notes against prices being pegged against US\$ in many shops. The value of Bond note against the United States Dollar is the main contributor to the current Zimbabwean situation, this has been facilitated mostly by illegal money changers at the parallel market which resulted in the whole situation unbearable for Zimbabwean teachers.

Exact estimates are difficult to obtain, but Zimbabwean teachers currently earn around RTGS 3500 per month, an amount which is equivalent to US\$ 85, which ranks them among the lowest paid civil servants in the country and in the region. Despite being regarded highly across the region for their contribution to the country's high literacy rate, Zimbabwean teachers in government institutions are still among the lowly-paid in the region (George and Rhodes, 2015). The challenges inherent in the teaching profession, especially in Zimbabwe, are poor working and living conditions (Chireshe and Shumba, 2011). With such challenges prevalent in teaching, it is surprising that people continue to join teaching.

Currently, the economy in the nation is poorer as compared to the period of the government of national unity (GNU) which makes the whole scenario. Research done in the field of education claims that some teachers are leaving their occupations for greener pastures in another place outside the country (Chireshe and Shumba, 2011). The significance of this study lies in that it strives to establish the consequences of the current economic situation on the education system in Zimbabwe. It is hoped that the results so gathered from this empirical study will deliver concrete evidence to key stakeholders so as to address the problem in the education system in a joint and collaborative manner. It is also predicted that the outcomes may be used to engage cooperating partners and funding agencies who might need to positively interfere to address some of the persistent problems. By assessing different survival strategies and livelihood engaged by teachers in Gweru, it will help the teachers themselves to realise the importance of concentrating on their jobs for the sake of the children who are our future leaders. It will also help the government to find better ways of motivating teachers and realise the importance of a teacher in society.

### **Problem Statement**

Although teachers play a pivotal role in all sectors of a country's economy, they work under poor conditions in developing nations (George and Rhodes, 2015). In Zimbabwe, in particular, teachers currently earn around RTGS 3500 (US\$85 equivalent) per month, but surprisingly they are attending to all their monthly cores such as payment for rent, transport to and from work, school fees for children and some have extended families to look after. The income from salary does not tally with the expenditure portraying that teachers are engaged in other money generating activities to cushion the deficit. Shockingly enough, people continue to join teaching profession in Zimbabwe. It has also been noted that little research on livelihood and survival strategies engaged by teachers in Zimbabwean is available. It is therefore against this background that a study to assess the livelihood and survival strategies engaged by Gweru urban teachers in this current flopping economy in Zimbabwe.

### **Objective of study**

The study sought to explore different livelihood and survival strategies engaged by teacher in Gweru urban under this current Zimbabwe flopping economy.

*Specific objectives*

- To find out different survival strategies engaged by teachers to supplement their low salaries.
- To determine factors influencing selection of survival strategies
- To assess the implication of such actions on pupil's performance

*Research questions*

- What are the different ways of surviving conducted by teachers to supplement their salaries?
- What is it that drives the teachers/headmasters to select different survival strategies
- What are the implications of such actions on pupil's performance?

**Research Methodology**

*Research Approach*

There are three paradigms in research, these include qualitative, quantitative and mixed methods. As highlighted by Cresswell (2012), qualitative data may be gathered through observing participants, collecting pamphlets or notes from a private (such as, diary) or public (such as, minutes of meetings) source, or collecting audiovisual materials like videotapes or artifacts. Quantitative data comprises of closed-ended information such as that found on attitude, behavior, or performance instruments. The researcher collected such kind of information through the use of closed-ended checklist, where the researcher checks the behaviors seen. Quantitative information can also be found in documents like census records or attendance records (Cohen et al, 2011). Mixed methods research involves both collecting and analyzing quantitative and qualitative data. In conducting this research the researcher used qualitative methods.

*Research Design*

Cohen et al., (2011) defined a research design as the plan, structure and strategy of investigation conceived so as to obtain answers to research questions and control variables. It is a conceptual structure within which the research will be conducted. The researcher used a case study which accommodates the use of data collection tools such as questionnaire and interviews. A case study provides researchers with a number of advantages which include the fact that they accomplish many of the same goals as other methods. This is so because case studies can be exploratory, thereby creating new knowledge, they can be constructive thereby solving a problem and as well as confirmatory by testing hypothesis. Case studies provide flexibility in that they enable the researcher to use primary data (that is researcher collects data) and secondary data (that is use existing data collected by others).

*Sampling Methods*

**(a) Sampling Procedure**

Dhingra and Dhingra (2012), defined a sample as, “a subject of population which should represent the main interest of the study.” The researcher used quota sampling to divide population and in order to employ the selected population that is representative to the whole targeted research population. The defining characteristic of a quota sample is that the researcher deliberately sets the proportions of levels or strata within the sample. This is generally done so as to include a certain division of the population. The researcher sets a quota, independent of population characteristics. Stratas ranged from the junior teacher to the headmaster.

### ***Sample Frame***

According to Cresswell (2012), a sampling frame refers to a list of the sampling units that are used in the selection of a sample. Five (5) schools were chosen in the Gweru urban and only headmasters and teachers participated in the research.

### **(b) Sample Size**

Dhingra and Dhingra (2012), defined a sample size as a subset of population and should represent the main interests of the study. A sample is a subset of the whole population. A sample was used since the researcher cannot test all the individuals in a population. Gweru urban has more than ten (10) secondary schools, each school with around forty (40) teachers so from a population of about two hundred (200) teachers only fifty five (55) participated in the research. From fifty five respondents fifty (50) were teachers and five (5) were headmasters. The fifty (50) teachers were given some questionnaires and interviews were conducted with the five (5) headmasters.

### ***Research Instruments***

To collect information about, an assessment of different livelihood and survival strategies engaged by Gweru urban secondary school teachers in the current Zimbabwe's flopping economy, the researcher used the following fact finding techniques:

- 1) Self-administered Questionnaires
- 2) Structured Interviews

### **(c) Questionnaires**

The self-administered questionnaire was presented to the respondents by the researcher with the help of the teachers in charge. The purpose of the questionnaire was explained, and then the respondents were left alone to complete the questionnaire, which the researcher collected later. This method assures a high response rate, and minimum bias, providing necessary explanations and giving the benefit of personal contact. The questionnaires were distributed to respondents for them to complete them at their convenient times. Open-ended and closed questions were used in the questionnaire. Open-ended questions were used because they permitted self-expression and richness of detail. Respondents had room to qualify and clarify their responses. Closed questions are easier to code and analyses statistically, (Magwa and Magwa, 2015) .The researcher used partially open questions, that is, a set of fixed choices of "other" which allowed respondents to offer an answer that the researcher might have left from the list.

### **(d) Interviews**

Structured interview were conducted with headmasters. It is that type of interview in which all questions are prepared beforehand and are put in the same order to each interviewee. It is also called directive interview. In its simplest form, a structured interview involves one person asking another person a list of predetermined questions about a carefully selected topic. It enables the researcher to examine the level of understanding a respondent has about a particular topic usually in slightly more depth than with a questionnaire. Gay (2013) defined interview as "a two-person conversation initiated by the interviewer for the specific purpose of obtaining research-relevant information, and focused by him on content specified by research objectives of systematic description, prediction, or explanation".

### *Sources of data*

#### **(e) Primary Data**

According to Kothari and Garg, (2014), primary sources provide direct description of the study by the person who actually observed or witnessed the occurrence of the event or carried it out. The justification for use lies in that data is gathered from the original source and hence more reliable. In this research, the primary data was collected using questionnaires and interviews.

### *Data Analysis Methods*

Data presentation is the systematic way of producing information gathered during research. Data collected was presented using qualitative and quantitative techniques using SPSS version 21. Descriptive statistics such as frequencies and percentages were used to describe demographic characteristics of respondents. Chi-Square test was used to determine associations between demographic variables and surviving strategies.

Data analysis is an application of reasoning to understand clear and interpret the data or information that will have been collected through the questionnaire and interview (Neuman, 2011). For analyzing the collected data, the researcher used grounded theory. This method involves building up inductively a systematic theory that is grounded in, or based on, the observations. Grounded theory has three stages which are the initial stage, coding and coming up with a theory. Cresswell (2012), have defined coding as simply “the process of analyzing data”. Strauss and Corbin’s method also consider “the making of comparisons and the asking of questions” as basic to the coding process.

The purpose of axial coding, according to Cresswell (2012) is to put the fractured data back together in new ways “by making connections between a category and its subcategory”. This is exactly what the researcher has done in conducting the research, start by coding which include asking questions from the respondents, there after the data was combined together by comparing what the respondents were saying and what was happening in the situation. This was done through data presentation and data analysis and there after the recommendations were given in relation to the research findings.

### *Ethical considerations*

Ethics are, the moral principles and values that govern the way an individual or group conduct its activities.

- In gathering data the researcher upheld the respect for privacy.
- The researcher got informed consent from the respondents by explaining the reasons for the research and informing them that the information they will give might be published.
- Permission to carry out the research was sought from the schools in time before the research is conducted.

### *Delimitations*

The study was limited to the teachers and headmasters in Gweru urban secondary school in Zimbabwe.

## **Results and Discussion**

### *Demographic Characteristics of Respondents*

Participants in the study constituted 40% (n=22) females and 60% (n=33) males. These were made up of approximately 9% (n=5) and 91% (n=55) headmasters and teachers respectively. This shows that teaching profession is still male dominated. The bulky of these

participants had less than 5 years of service (36.4%; n=20), this therefore implies that people just join teaching profession as a last option and as soon as they get better jobs they leave the profession which is the reason why bulk of the teachers are found in the category of below five years in service. Table 1 below summarizes the demographic characteristics of the respondents used in the research.

**Table 1: Demographic Characteristic of Respondents**

VARIABLE	VARIABLE DESCRIPTION	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
<b>GENDER</b>	Female	22	40,0
	Male	33	60,0
	<b>Total</b>	<b>55</b>	<b>100,0</b>
<b>POSITION</b>	Headmaster	5	9,1
	Teacher	50	90,9
	<b>Total</b>	<b>55</b>	<b>100,0</b>
<b>LENGTH OF SERVICE (to the nearest 1 year)</b>	<5 years	20	36,4
	6-10 years	11	20,0
	11-15 years	9	16,4
	16-20 years	12	21,8
	>20 years	3	5,5
	<b>Total</b>	<b>55</b>	<b>100,0</b>
<b>EDUCATIONAL QUALIFICATIONS</b>	Diploma	27	49,1
	Degree	16	29,1
	Masters	12	21,8
	Other	0	0
	<b>Total</b>	<b>55</b>	<b>100,0</b>
<b>MARITAL STATUS</b>	Single	7	12.7
	Married	30	54.5
	Divorced	7	12.7
	Widowed	6	10.9
	Separated	3	5.5
	Never Married	2	3.6
	<b>Total</b>	<b>55</b>	<b>100</b>

Only a few of the respondents had attained more than 20 years of teaching experience (5.5%; n=3). Nearly half of the respondents (49.1%; n=27) were diploma holders and the remainder 16% and 12% were holders of a degree and a masters qualification respectively. This indicates that most of the teachers are relaxing when it comes to upgrading themselves. The sample collected comprised of 54.5% (n=30) married respondents with single, divorced and widowed represented in almost equal proportions of 12.7%, 12.7% and 10.9% respectively. The separated and never married groups had representation far below 10% as indicated in the table below. The higher proportion of married people in the teaching field shows that the only thing which ties the teacher to his/her job is the need to support the family.

*Survival strategies adopted by secondary school teachers in Gweru urban*

The research revealed that teachers in the Gweru urban have adopted a total of fourteen (15) livelihood/survival strategies. These strategies are as summarized in Table 2 below. Over 50% of the teachers recruited in the study indicated that borrowing money from banks/microfinance institutions, extra lessons with external students, poultry production, cross border trading, part-time teaching at private schools, production of horticultural produce and selling goods (*maputi* “dried corn”, sweets, peanut butter, *jiggies* “snacks” etc...) were pillars to their survival in this flopping economy. Chagonda (2012) indicated that borrowing has been a well-known survival strategy in time of hardship, this however is in line with the bulky of Zimbabwean teachers who are surviving on borrowed money from banks and microfinance institutions (n=50; 90.9%) leaving them in a worse off condition due to high interest rates charged on repayments. This drives the teachers into seeking other alternative strategies for survival such as conducting extra lessons with external or internal students; engaging in agricultural activities (poultry and horticultural production); cross border trading; part time teaching at private schools and the selling of goods (*maputi* “dried corn”, sweets, peanut butter, *jiggies* “snacks”...etc). More than 50 percent of the study participants indicated that the above mentioned strategies forms the basis for their survival in the collapsing Zimbabwean economy, which is an indication that their salaries are not enough to sustain their living.

**Table 2: Ranked Survival Strategies Adopted by Secondary School Teachers in Gweru Urban**

LIVELIHOOD/SURVIVAL STRATEGY	RANKING S	FREQUENC Y	PERCENTAG E
Borrowing Money from Banks and Microfinance institutions	1	50	90.9
Extra Lessons with external Students	2	36	65.5
Poultry Production	3	35	63.6
Cross Border Trading	4	33	60.0
Part time teaching at Private Schools	5	31	56.4
Production of Horticultural Produce	6	30	54.5
Selling Goods ( <i>Maputi</i> “dried corn”, Sweets, Peanut Butter, <i>Jiggies</i> “snacks” etc...)	6	30	54.4
Hired as Private Taxis	8	23	41.4
Extra Lessons with internal Students	9	20	36.4
Contracted to ferry children to and from school	10	12	21.8
Operating as Private Taxis	11	9	16.4
Hair Dressing	12	6	10.9
Hired to transport goods using trucks	13	5	9.1
Mining	14	2	3.6
Operating Commuter Omnibuses	14	2	3.6

Other vital survival strategies though adopted by less than half of the sampled teachers included; hired as private taxis, mining, extra lessons with internal students, contracted to ferry children to and from school, operating commuter omnibuses, hired to transport goods using

trucks, mining and hair dressing. Of these, operating commuter omnibus, mining and hired to transport goods using trucks have been adopted by a few teachers (less than 10%).

*Influence of demographic characteristics on adopted survival strategy*

For the 15 identified survival strategies, gender only influenced the adoption of cross border trading ( $\chi^2 = 4.558$ ;  $p < 0.05$ ) and hair dressing ( $\chi^2 = 10.102$ ;  $p < 0.005$ ). Female teachers tend to be more inclined to these strategies than their male counterparts. A high proportion of females (77.3%;  $n=17$ ) were involved in cross border trading as compared to males (48.5%;  $n=16$ ). Hair dressing proved to be a female dominated industry with 27.3% ( $n=6$ ) females taking part in this business and none in the male category.

Provision of extra lesson to external pupils and transport business were highly influenced by the job title (Headmaster/Teacher). Delivery of extra lesson to external pupils was significantly associated with job title ( $\chi^2 = 5.026$ ;  $p < 0.05$ ) with the involvement of teachers and headmasters constituting 70% and 20% in proportion respectively. The proportion of headmasters in the transport business (hired to transport goods and operating commuter omnibuses) was higher than the proportion among teachers (40% against 6%;  $\chi^2 = 4.203$ ;  $p < 0.05$ ). The number of years in the teaching profession (length of service) was also linked with undertaking transport business as a survival strategy ( $\chi^2 = 20.75$ ;  $p < 0.0001$  for operating commuter omnibus,  $\chi^2 = 31.053$ ;  $p < 0.05$  for hired to transport goods and  $\chi^2 = 14.569$ ;  $p < 0.01$ ). The more the number of years in the profession the higher the likelihood of engaging in the transport business. For the 40% ( $n=2$ ) whose livelihood depended on operating commuter omnibuses, all of them had more than 20 years of work experience as teachers. For those who were hired to transport goods, 33.3% ( $n=4$ ) had between 16 and 20 years in the service and 20% ( $n=1$ ) had more than 20 years in the profession. On the note, the proportion of professional who operated as private taxis increased with the increasing number of years in the teaching field distributed as follows; 16.7% ( $n=2$ , 6-10 years), 33.3% ( $n=4$ , 16-20 years) and 60% ( $n=3$ , above 20 years). Transport business requires large capital, hence headmasters by virtue of being in the industry for many years chances are that they could have accumulated enough capital to venture into the business unlike their counterparts who have just joined the profession.

Interestingly was the relationship between level of education and engagement in offering part time services to private schools. It was clearly evident that a significant association between the two variables existed ( $\chi^2 = 6.719$ ;  $p < 0.05$ ). The higher the qualification attained the greater chances of being hired as part time private tutors in private schools. Ninety (90%,  $n=9$ ) holders of master degree, 58.8% ( $n=10$ ) degreed teachers and 42.9% ( $n=12$ ) diploma holders were involved in offering part time services to private schools as a way of augmenting their meagre salaries.

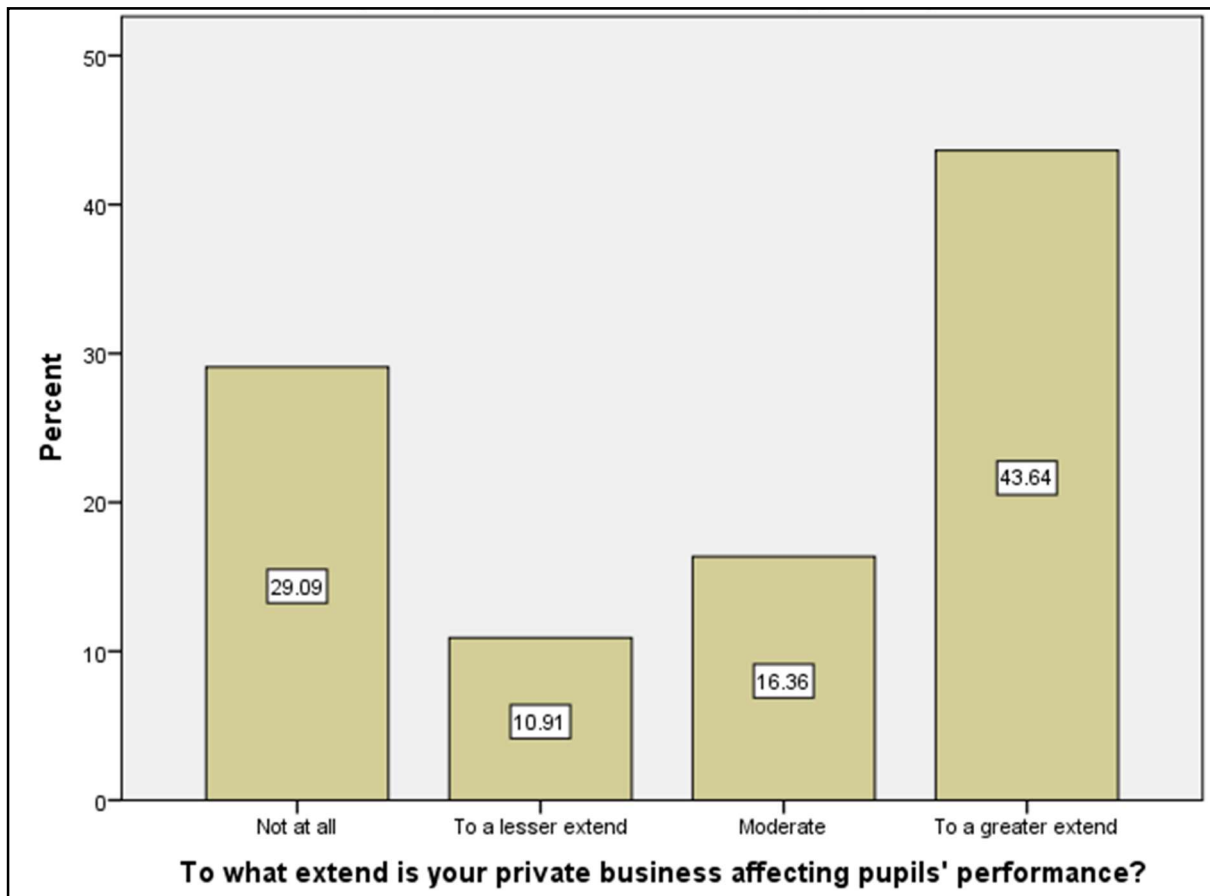
*Implications of teachers' involvement in private businesses on pupils' performance*

Eighty-one percent (81.8%;  $n=45$ ) of the respondents interviewed indicated that they are failing to balance the job demands and their private business. Thus some (21%) have resorted to schedule their private businesses during working hours. Figure 1 below show how time have secondary school teachers in the Gweru urban allocate their time for private business.



***Figure 1: Time for private business as indicated by secondary school teachers and headmaster in Gweru Urban***

A greater proportion of the respondents (70.91%; n=38) agreed that venturing into private businesses (survival strategies) have a bearing on the performance of pupils at secondary schools. It is clear from the research findings that most of the teachers are failing to balance the job demands and their private businesses, this therefore have a serious impact on the pupils' overall performance. Some are conducting their businesses during working hours, some after working hours, some on holidays and some during weekends but the bottom line is that teachers are failing to balance their time. Figure 2 below summarizes the response by the participants on their views with respect to the extend survival strategies interfere with the performances of pupils.



**Figure 2: Views on the interference of adoption of survival strategies by secondary school teachers/headmasters on the performance of school pupils.**

### Conclusion

The most common survival strategies being adopted by teachers in the Gweru urban in this flopping economy include among others; borrowing money from banks/microfinance institutions, conducting extra lessons with external students, poultry production, cross border trading, part-time teaching at private schools, production of horticultural produce and selling goods (*maputi* “dried corn”, sweets, peanut butter, *jiggies* “snacks” etc...). Gender only influenced the adoption of cross border trading and hair dressing. Provision of extra lesson to external pupils and transport business were highly influenced by the job title (Headmaster/Teacher). The number of years in the teaching profession (length of service) was also linked with undertaking transport business as a survival strategy. Level of education was highly associated with engagement in offering part time services to private schools. It is clear from the research findings that most of the teachers are failing to balance the job demands and their private businesses, this therefore have a serious impact on the pupils’ overall performance.

### Recommendation

From the research findings it is clear that the economy has collapsed to the extent that teachers’ salary cannot sustain their living. Below are some recommendations:

- Teachers remuneration – this is one of the biggest challenge the teaching sector is facing in our country so to that note the government should prioritize addressing the salary of teachers because this paltry salary is affecting not only teachers but also the students.

- The government should also try and use other incentives such as providing housing stands and paying/subsidies fees for teacher's children as a way of compensating their low salaries. Even though most of people value money but by providing these non-monetary benefits will help ease the burden from teachers. Tangible compensation also consists of rewards that carry symbolic value in that they convey to people how much they are valued by their employer (Bakasa, 2016).
- The findings also revealed that teachers are not motivated at all. Without motivated teachers no effective learning will take place (Mapolisa et al 2014). Standards of education are now very low because of demotivated teachers. The government should find some donors to assist in the education sector. The donor can assist the student by bringing some learning materials and giving teachers some incentives as well.
- It is recommended that as much as teachers want to supplement their salaries, they should prioritize their job first for the sake of pupils' overall performance.

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