

Impediments Embedding Decentralisation of Teacher Recruitment Practices to Communities in Zimbabwe

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ABSTRACT Decentralization is the process of devolving power from the centre to lower levels of authority. In the education sector, it involves delegation of such duties as recruitment, deployment, discipline and supervision to the local communities. It seems probable that the implementation of decentralization policy in education in Zimbabwe and all over was as a response to the impact and pressure of globalization. The study therefore sought to establish issues and challenges impeding the decentralization of the recruitment policy of teachers in Zimbabwe. The study adopted an interpretive qualitative research methodology and a case study research design. A purposive convenient sample of twenty two school heads and three Education Officers (EO) from Gweru District formed the study. Data was collected through face- to- face interviews and documentary analysis. The study began the process of data analysis by transcribing verbatim audio taped interviews. The results were cross-checked with the participants. The study established that the advent of the decentralization of the recruitment and selection of teachers to schools appeared to have given birth to a new breed of concerns and outcries from both the professional and the general civic society. The idea of nepotism, favouritism, bribery and corruption was also reported to be rampant in most schools. Thus the government took over again the recruitment and selection of teachers in Zimbabwe. School heads therefore need induction courses on management to be able to advice their school development committees on best recruitment practices.

INTRODUCTION AND RATIONALE OF THE STUDY

Decentralization is defined as the transfer of decision-making authority closer to the consumer or beneficiary. This can take the form of transferring powers to lower levels of an organization, which is called deconcentration or administrative decentralization (Winkler 2012). A popular form of deconcentration in education is to give additional responsibilities to schools. This is often called school autonomy or school-based management and may take the form of creating elected or appointed school councils and giving them budgets and the authority to make important educational decisions. Deconcentration may also take the form of empowering school heads or directors and teachers to make decisions within the school (Ariel 2001; Winkler 2012). Another form of decentralization, called devolution, entails transferring powers to lower levels of government. Most often, education responsibilities are transferred to general-purpose

governments at the regional or local levels (Winkler 2012). Examples are the decentralization of basic education to local (district) level governments in India and Pakistan. In rare cases additional responsibilities are given to single-purpose governments, such as the local school district in the United States. When education responsibilities are transferred to general-purpose governments, the elected governing bodies of those governments must make decisions about how much to spend on education versus other local services (Ariel 2001; Naidoo 2002; Winkler 2012).

Advocates of various forms of decentralization have offered a long list of rationale for decentralization (Naidoo 2002). Rondinelli (1983: 81) identified a variety of arguments that have been made for decentralization in developing countries as follows:

- decentralization of authority to officials who are working in the field and closer to problems allows officials to disaggregate and tailor development plans and programs to the needs of the people at the regional and local levels.
- decentralization has the potential of cutting through enormous amounts of bureaucrat-

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ic hurdles that are supposedly attributed to central planning.

- ♦ decentralizing functions to the local levels allows for utilization of indigenous knowledge and experience, as well as local sensitivity to development challenges.
- ♦ allows for more efficient communication and understanding of central government policies and programs to the local level.
- ♦ facilitates accountability, transparency and representability in decision-making and a decentralized government structure is needed to institutionalize the popular participation of citizens in development planning and administration.

Decentralization is based on an examination of a number of reforms. According to McGuinn and Welsh (1999: 28), decentralization has been proposed to: improve education per se directly, for example, by: Increasing the amount of inputs to schooling. Decentralization also improves the quality of inputs to schooling; increases the relevance of programmes or matching programme content to local interests and this increases the innovativeness of programmes; increases the range of options available to students thereby reducing inequalities in access to education of quality and increasing learning outcomes; improves the operation of the education system, for example, by: Increasing the efficiency in allocation of resources; increasing efficiency in the utilization of resources; increasing the match of programmes to employers' requirements and increasing the use of information about issues, problems or innovations (thereby improving efficiency).

Naidoo (2002: 19) has also come up with a number of reasons for the rationale of decentralization in the education sector as follows: insufficient capacity to carry out tasks associated with the provision of public services was a major consideration in deciding on decentralization of education in developing contexts motivated by the capacity to discharge responsibilities at the local level; while improvement in teaching/learning is always desirable, it is generally the primary objective of most decentralization initiatives. Political and economic objectives such as transferring costs from the national to regional budgets drove the reform rather than educational considerations; local decision makers are likely to be more accountable to clients, more responsive to local needs and provide better quality

education than the central authorities and communities are capable of increased involvement in education management issues at the school level and improvements in the school environment.

Effects of Decentralization

It has also become clear from experience that not all of the alleged benefits materialize and that few developing countries have been highly successful in carrying out their decentralized programmes (Winkler 2012). Simply creating decentralized structures for developing decision making and announcing new procedures for participation in development planning and administration do not guarantee that they will be effective or that they will generate economic growth with greater social equity (Rondinelli and Cheema 1983). It is extremely difficult to disentangle the effects of education decentralization policies from other variables simultaneously affecting educational outcomes, and there have been few rigorous attempts to do so. Two studies that did attempt to isolate the effects of devolution in Central America concluded that it increased parental participation, reduced teacher and student absenteeism, and increased student learning by a significant, but small, amount (Ariel 2001).

The Zimbabwe Situation

Zimbabwe, like other African and developing countries, implemented some of the above changes in education when it gained independence in 1980. In order to redress past imbalances and inequities, the government declared education a basic human right and committed itself to universal and equal educational opportunity for all as proclaimed by UNESCO (2001). It was within this broad framework that the Government, buttressed by the progressive Bill of Rights in the Independence Constitution of Zimbabwe, reorganised, democratised and expanded its education system (UNESCO 2001). There was increase in enrolment and revision of curriculum and teacher development to enhance quality in education. In an attempt to maximise the attainment of the goals that the state had set for itself, certain operational conditions had to be adopted and implemented.

These changes enhanced the amendment of the 1987 Act as detailed below (UNESCO 2001: 46): Abolition of all forms of racial discrimination in

the provision of education; creation of a unitary national education system, thus the pre independence dual education system was abolished; abolition of primary school tuition fees as well as a way of introducing free and compulsory primary education; provisions for all children who complete the primary school cycle to proceed to secondary education; provision of state support for non-formal, adult and literacy programmes; decentralisation of the management and administration of the education system to promote efficiency and equity in the development of regions; expansion of teacher education so as to release more trained teachers into the school system and reduce the use of untrained and often under-trained teachers and expatriates. In 1990 the EFA (Education for All) programme was faced with real challenges that had not been anticipated before. Some of these challenges required a redefinition of strategies and policies to suit the new order. A number of these emanated from the socio-economic milieu. The fall of communism in 1989 meant that Zimbabwe had to change look and give up socialism for a western type democracy, which was characterised by an open market economy (UNESCO 2001).

The World Bank and International Monetary Fund (IMF) sponsored Economic Structural Adjustment Programme (ESAP) was adopted as a strategy for economic recovery. ESAP intended to reform and adjust the economy in order to create more jobs and goods for the people in Zimbabwe (UNESCO 2005). It was a move towards a capitalist market economy in which the role of the state was to be reduced to a minimum. The economy is freed from government control and left to the market. Cost recovery measures introduced under ESAP were a direct threat to free primary education (UNESCO 2005). In 1992, tuition fees were re-introduced in urban areas causing untold suffering among urban poor and those who had lost their jobs by reason of ESAP. The Zimbabwe Programme for Economic and Social Transformation (ZIMPREST) was adopted in 1996 as a continuation of ESAP. Economic recovery remained an illusive mirage for Zimbabwe. In 1997, the Zimbabwe dollar lost ground against major currencies. Both inflation and high interest rates continued to sour to unprecedented levels. Unfortunately, ESAP coincided with the 1991/1992 drought (Matunhu 1997).

The government of Zimbabwe in line with the above mentioned objectives of Economic Struc-

tural Adjustment Programme (ESAP) and Zimbabwe Programme for Economic and Social Transformation (ZIMPREST) adopted the policy of decentralisation as a means of: improving the delivery of services to the nation and ensuring equitable distribution of national resources; promoting democracy, public participation and civic responsibility in the development process; increasing efficiency and effectiveness in government and therefore enhancing service delivery and reducing the direct role of central government in the delivery of services (UNESCO 2001: 62).

As a result of the decentralisation process, the Ministry of Education devolved some functions to the regions, districts and schools. These functions included; standards control, staffing, human resource development, supervision, counselling, budgeting, liaison with the internal and external clients of the ministry. In terms of hierarchy, the regional office is the link pin of the head office and the district offices while the district offices link clusters and individual schools with their regional office. The cluster plays the role of linking individual schools with the district. However, the relationship between schools and the cluster is fluid in that there is a direct link between the district office and individual schools. Schools have also been mandated to establish school development associations (SDA) and school development committees (SDC) so as to assist heads of schools in running the institutions. Therefore, certain functions have been devolved to SDA/SDC's (Wadesango and Shumba 2009).

A school development committee consists of: (a) five persons elected, subject to these regulations, by parents of pupils at the school (b) the head of the school (c) the deputy head of the school (d) a teacher at the school, who shall be appointed by the secretary (statutory Instrument 87 of 1992, Part 11: section 4: 613). According to section 29A of the Act every SDA/SDC shall exercise the following functions, namely: to provide and assist in the operation and development of the school; to advance the moral, cultural, physical and intellectual welfare of pupils at the school; to promote the welfare of the school for the benefit of its present and future pupils and their parents, and its teachers; to take all measures that appear to it to be necessary or expedient to preserve and maintain the properties and facilities of the school; to employ or

hire staff to serve the needs of the school, on such terms and conditions as the committee may fix with the approval of the Minister of Education; to borrow money on such terms and conditions as the committee considers expedient and to receive grants and donations, whether from parents of pupils at the school or from other persons; to apply its funds towards the promotion of its objects; by means of insurance policies, to protect its property and the property of the school (Statutory Instrument 87 of 1992, Part 11). Among other things, the other main functions of these committees are to promote, improve and encourage the development and maintenance of the school (Statutory Instrument 87 of 1992, Part 11). These are corporate bodies, which ensure that people participate in the development of education at local level. Some of the school committees have developed their schools to levels that central Government alone would not have managed though there are very few effective SDA/SDCs. This has led to effective cost sharing and sustainable development.

Decentralisation of Teacher Recruitment Policy in Zimbabwe

The government of Zimbabwe decentralised the recruitment of teachers in 1998. Thus, the government launched the process of a school-based teacher recruitment process where schools together with their SDA/SDCs were expected to recruit personnel to serve their schools. Under this arrangement, the school was to identify the available vacancies and advertise for applications, indicating where they were tenable. In turn the SDC/SDAs were to conduct interviews and make recommendations to the central government. This was a departure from the traditional recruitment policy where teachers were deployed from the District Offices. This paradigm shift was intended to enhance teacher retention and equity in teacher distribution. However, the school-based teacher recruitment policy has faced incessant challenges in public schools. According to the report given by Nziramasanga (2000), the Zimbabwean government implemented decentralisation to align its education system with other global standards, but the country was not economically stable enough for this.

Conceptual Framework

This study has adopted the Discrepancy model of teacher recruitment. According to Malu-

si (1990) the discrepancy model postulates that the goal of discrepancy investigation is to look for differences or gaps between what was intended and what has actually happened and or other aspects of the programme which should be in agreement. According to this model, the main areas to look for in discrepancy in the school-based teacher recruitment policy are:

- ♦ Policy plans on one hand and actual policy implementation on the other hand
- ♦ Planned objectives versus actual outcomes
- ♦ Differences between assumptions and the reality
- ♦ Discrepancy between different aspects of the policy

Aloo et al. (2011) assert that if school based teacher recruitment exercise was effectively implemented then it would lead to an even distribution of teachers, good retention of teachers and efficiency in recruitment of teachers. On the contrary, if it was not effectively implemented it would lead to poor distribution of teachers and thus an indication of efficiency in teacher recruitment practices. The independent variable is school based teacher recruitment policy and if implemented it can produce the desired outcomes. The dependant variables are distribution of teachers and efficiency in recruitment of teachers because they depend on the effect of the school-based teacher recruitment policy (Malusi 1990; Aloo et al. 2011).

METHODOLOGY

This study adopted a qualitative interpretive research methodology. The study concentrated on the qualitative form since this research aimed at elucidating what the participants had to say with regard to decision-making in their natural settings. In this regard, it was imperative that a methodological perspective be adopted to allow the findings to develop "from the data itself rather than from preconceived, rigidly structured, and highly quantified techniques that pigeonhole the empirical social world into the operational definitions that the researcher has constructed" (Creswell 2002). The problem identified in this study demanded that the participants themselves be allowed to freely express their feelings, views and opinions. To this end, Sherman and Webb (in Ely 1991: 4) provide the following definition "...qualitative implies a direct concern with feelings, experiences and views as lived or felt or undergone..." This study adopted a case-study research design. A case study is described as a

form of descriptor research that gathers a large amount of information about one or a few participants and thus investigates a few cases in considerable depth (Thomas and Nelson 2001). Purposive convenience sampling of twenty two school heads and three education officers from Gweru Education District was adopted in the selection of participants for this study

Data Collection Instruments

The researchers looked for rich, detailed information of a qualitative nature. The methods that were used to gather information for this study were concerned with seeking participants' written and verbal information on the way problems are solved and decisions are taken in their schools. Therefore, the strategies used produced descriptive data based on insights rather than statistical data where hypothesis testing is involved. Two types of strategies that were used to provide the data for this study were: individual interviews and document analysis.

Interviews

Semi-structured interviews were used in this study. This method was preferred because data was gathered systematically and the researchers were assured that no data was omitted. Through the use of interviews, the interviewer was able to elaborate on issues and questions as well as clarifying the meaning of statements, answers or questions that may not have been clear to the interviewee. Through use of semi-structured interviews, respondents were able to express themselves freely since the main purpose of this study was to let respondents narrate their experiences with regard to the teacher recruitment policy. In the process the study was able to get rich thick data from participants and this increased the validity of the findings of the research. During the interviews, certain issues respondents tended to leave unexplained were effectively probed. By so doing the study was able to gain a detailed understanding of the respondents' opinions rather than would be the case when using mailed questionnaires.

Documentary Analysis

Various documents that were related to teacher recruitment practices were examined. Such documents included public records, personal

documents and physical material already present in the research setting. Documents helped the researchers to uncover meaning, develop understanding and discover insights.

Ethical Considerations

According to Creswell (1994), a researcher has an obligation to respect the rights, needs, values and desires of the respondents. The research was therefore conducted with respect and concern for the dignity and welfare of the informants. The individual's right to decline to participate was respected in this study. The researchers ensured that the purpose and activities of the research were clearly explained to the participants. The authors of this document ensured that promises and commitments were honoured by safeguarding participants' identities.

Biographical Data of Respondents

The biographical data assists in providing critical information on decision-making in schools. For example, the examination of academic and professional qualifications of the respondents helps one to better understand and appreciate the calibre of the respondents. It provides a picture of the level to which these respondents are likely to understand the decision-making dynamics. Obviously, their perceptions are influenced by their educational backgrounds.

Teaching experience as a bio-data will also assist in determining whether the views of the respondents are congruent with their knowledge of the job at hand as well as the art of decision making. Scholars tend to think that perceptions are also influenced by gender, hence the need to profile the respondents with respect to their gender. It is assumed that a fuller understanding of these respondents attributes will make it easier to better understand why certain practices are in place within the administration of schools vis-à-vis decision making. To better understand the level to which teachers participate in decision making, it is imperative that one gets a clear understanding of the calibre of the respondents.

Table 1 shows that there were more males who took part in this study than females. Since this was a purposive sampling, this may not necessarily mean that the schools in question have more males than females. It only suggests that these were the people who were considered to

have a substantial amount of knowledge on the subject of decision making in schools.

Table 1: Gender range of the respondents (n=25)

<i>Gender</i>	<i>Number</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
Males	15	60
Females	10	40
Total	25	100.0

Table 2 shows that the majority (52%) of the respondents was middle aged. These were below 40 years old. The table also shows that very few school heads were in the age bracket of above 50.

Table 2: Age structure of the respondents (N=25)

<i>Age range</i>	<i>Males</i>	<i>Females</i>	<i>Grand total</i>
40 and below	5	2	28.0
41- 45	3	3	24.0
46-50	4	3	28.0
Over 50	3	2	20.0
Total	15	10	100.0

Table 3 shows that all school heads and Education officers hold the minimum requirement of an O"level certificate. A total of 11 (44%) respondents had "A" levels over and above their O" levels. More so, the information on the table gives the researcher the impression that the respondents may likely understand the process of decentralisation in a deeper way. This is because the entire respondents' educational background is very good. Therefore if an educational qualification is a critical factor in decision making, then there is room to conclude that these school heads are better informed in so far as the issue of decentralisation is concerned. Their level of education would make it easier for them to interpret the motives and the interview instrument better. In order to get further insights about the quality of the respondents, the researchers established their professional qualifications. The findings are presented in Table 4.

Table 3: Respondents' academic qualifications (N=25)

<i>Academic qualification</i>	<i>Males</i>	<i>Females</i>	<i>% Males</i>	<i>% Females</i>	<i>Total</i>
'O' Level certificate	8	6	53.6	60.0	56.0
'A' Level certificate	7	4	46.4	40.0	44.0
Total	15	10	100.0	100.0	100.0

Table 4: Highest professional qualifications (N=25)

<i>Professional qualification</i>	<i>Males</i>	<i>Females</i>	<i>% Males</i>	<i>% Females</i>	<i>Total</i>
Teacher Certificate level 4	0	0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Certificate in Education	3	6	20.1	60.0	36.0
Diploma in Education	4	2	26.7	20.0	24.0
Bachelor of Education	6	2	40.2	20.0	32.0
Master of Education	2	0	13.4	0.0	8.0
Total	15	10	100.0	100.0	100.0

Table 4 shows that all the respondents are qualified officers- holding at least a Certificate in Education in an area of specialty. It was also noted that there are respondents that hold university degrees. These numbered to 10 or 40% of the respondents. Among these respondents were 2 (8%) who hold a Masters' degree in Education. Again, this picture gives the impression that the respondents are likely to give valued responses given their relatively high academic and professional qualifications.

To get an even deeper understanding of the respondents, the researcher collected data on the respondents' professional experience as school heads. To this end the findings are presented in Table 5.

Table 5: Respondents' experience (N=25)

<i>Teaching experience in years</i>	<i>Males</i>	<i>Females</i>	<i>% Males</i>	<i>% Females</i>	<i>Total</i>
below 5	0	0	0.0	0.0	0.0
5 - 10	4	0	26.6	0.0	16.0
11-20	6	6	40.0	60.0	48.0
21-30	2	2	13.2	20.0	16.0
31 and above	3	2	13.2	20.0	20.0
Total	15	10	100.0	100.0	100.0

Table 5 indicates that 48% of the respondents have extensive experience that ranges between 11-20 years. Five of the respondents had over 30 years of experience. However, there were other respondents whose headship experience fell below 10 years. These numbered 4 out of the 25 respondents. It is also apparent that no respondent had less than 5 years of experience as a head. The meaning one deduces from this data

set is that the respondents were well experienced in the teaching profession.

With this presentation of the bio-data, the study proceeds to present findings with respect to the questions raised in the interviews:

RESULTS OF THE STUDY

Decentralization of the recruitment and selection of teachers coupled with proper perception and high positive involvement of the grass-roots have often been heralded as positively correlated with school efficiency and effectiveness (Matunhu 2002). In Zimbabwe, the enunciated 1992 non-government as well as the 1993 government schools regulations as supported by Section 29(A) of the Education Act of 1987 respectively mandated schools to establish School Recruitment Committees (SRCs) so as to assist school heads with the recruitment and selection of teachers. These committees comprised of the school head, the deputy head, any two senior teachers, the SDC chairman, the SDC secretary as well as the area counselor.

However, the advent of the decentralization of the recruitment and selection of teachers to SRCs appeared to have given birth to a new breed of concerns and outcries from both the professional and the general civic society. Take for example, the weekly Sandawana Newspaper of between 14 and 22nd August 1998 by Moyo (1998) carried a treacherous and shameful article on how corrupt tendencies prevailed in the recruitment and selection of teachers by specified SRCs. As if to add salt to fresh wounds, The Times (weekly of 2nd to 8th March, by Shumba 2001) also carried a highly sensational and volatile account of how War Veterans (former freedom fighters) took over, in ultra-vires the function of recruitment and selection of teachers in Gokwe District.

The idea of nepotism, favouritism, bribery and corruption was also reported to be rampant in most of the SRCs. Thus the government took over again the recruitment and selection of teachers in Zimbabwe. Respondents in this study indicated that school heads are now required to declare to the District Education Offices any vacant posts and teachers are deployed from the District Offices. This was confirmed by one of the responding teachers who made the following comments: "we are not involved in this exercise at all. Schools get teachers from the District Staffing Officer". This respondent was

supported by one of the participating school heads who also made the following comments:

We used to be involved in the recruitment and selection of teachers. However for reasons beyond our control, the exercise has now been centralized to District Offices. We declare all open posts and staffing is done by the Staffing Officer. The problem we have now is that at times we spend one or two months before the post is filled. Another problem we are encountering is that we also get teachers without the required subject combinations. It is essential that the recruitment process is done with great care, for the school will be stuck with that teacher for some time, perhaps forever. There is need to involve schools in some stages.

All participating heads advocated SRC involvement in this exercise. They pointed out that the ultimate result of recruiting the wrong person is that the quality of instruction will be poor. Furthermore, the quality of students is likely to deteriorate in a commensurate way. Participating school heads claimed that the current process is not taking into cognizance the specific needs of the school and the community in general. Heads in this study therefore, recommended that legal instruments be put in place and effectively communicated to the SRCs to avoid likely lawsuits which may be caused by poor knowledge of their duty. Heads feel that there is need to train these operatives in accordance with Ministry expectations and then decentralize the exercise again.

Education officers who were interviewed concurred with school heads that deployment of teachers was now a central government's prerogative. One of the education officers brought to the fore that certain schools failed to attract competent, experienced and highly qualified teachers due to reasons such as : proximity of school, geographical location of the school, performance of the school, socio-economic status of the school and so forth. Another education officer who was interviewed had this to say:

We had wanted schools to be more involved in decisions that relate to recruitment of staff as a way of empowering schools and their communities and making the system more efficient by reducing the red tape that was characteristic of centralised decision-making. However we had to reverse the system on account of the following:

(a) Some school heads were not competent enough to conduct transparent selection interviews for the prospective teachers

(b) *Representatives of School Governing Bodies (SGBs) were supposed to be part of the selecting teams. However, it came to our attention that most of them were hardly literate and could hardly understand issues that had to do with proper recruitment of teachers. This was particularly so in rural schools where most SGB members were not appointed on the basis of merit. Most people were just voted into positions on the basis of popularity. Such members did not contribute much in the selection interviews as they lacked the competence expected of their roles. Under such conditions school heads would simply impose people of their choices.*

(c) *School heads were abusing the system by recruiting people who were related or connected to them in some way. This did not augur well for an education system that was meant to promote equal employment opportunities to all.*

(d) *Some school heads were very unprofessional and unethical in their conduct. For instance, they would demand payment from the prospective employee before appointment. Payment would range from, money, gifts, a beast such as a goat, sheep or cow.*

(e) *Schools were biased against people who were coming from distant places. The tendency was to recruit only those from the local areas. People from faraway places were only considered if local people were not forthcoming. This was unacceptable as it was a form of discrimination and yet the ministry had pledged to combat discrimination in whatever form.*

We realised that if the system was allowed to go on unabated, it would bring the whole ministry of education and the teaching profession into disrepute and thereby defeating the whole aim of efficiency upon which the policy of decentralisation was based.

In support of the above sentiments, another participating Education Officer had this to say:

Some of these school heads are unprofessional. One of them was sued after having collected bribe from two different teachers he had promised the same post. Others especially male ones, were demanding sex first from aspiring female teachers. We were receiving all these reports from disgruntled teachers and members of the community. Another report we received and investigated was that one school head had now developed a tendency of victimizing his teachers so that they could transfer from his school,

then he would advertise the post for the sack of receiving kick backs from aspiring employees. They were doing all sorts of unbelievable things to manipulate the system. I remember when we reversed the policy, one school head is said to have literally cried.

Records reviewed indicated that teachers were being deployed from the district offices. Heads of schools were required to make their submissions to their District offices. Teachers are then deployed from the central offices. However, it was brought to the fore by one of the participating school heads that one of the staffing officers at the District offices was discharged of his duties after asking for a bribe from a teacher who was related to the Governor of the Province. This could be an indicator that there is no one immune to corruption.

DISCUSSION

It was established in this study that schools were no longer involved in certain components of decentralisation such as the recruitment and selection of teachers. It emerged that all participating schools had established SDA/SDC committees as mandated by the government but however, some of the participating heads have indicated that these committees were not longer effective at all in teacher recruitment practices. However, decentralisation of teacher recruitment policy was designed to empower local administrators who were closest to points of delivery. McGinn and Welsh (1999 in Masuku 2010) acknowledged the decentralisation of teacher recruitment power closer to service delivery as a leading universal principle held by a growing body of researchers on the performance of organisations. They suggest that the most effective governance of any organisation occurs when authority for decision-making power is located as close as possible to the site where actions are taken. Theirs, and other similar perspectives likely from the pervading rationale for the adoption of decentralisation policy in Zimbabwe and in other countries around the world (Masuku 2010). Masuku further asserts that central governments are accused of distributing responsibilities to local levels but withholding power for real decision making. In support Weiler (1990) observes that there seems to be a basic tension between decentralisation on the one hand and a tendency to resort to centralised control over the system by the state on the other.

The study established that in most cases, schools were no longer consulted by the government in this decision making area. Teachers were now being imposed on schools by the central government. Lundgren (1990 in Masuku 2010) propounds that, while reforms are directed towards increasing the influence of the clients who are the local authorities and the students themselves, the basic organisational structure is not changed at the same time. Influence and control follow the same forms and are organised in the same way as before. Everard et al. (2004) consider the change of structures in implementing a policy a significant aspect to facilitate smooth progress. Masuku (2010) also asserts that some detractors contend that dubious political motives drive the adoption of decentralisation policy. According to him, the Zimbabwe's central government has decentralised responsibilities to local levels but retains financial power in terms of the resources that local governments need to function. This is used to validate the view that the government has ulterior motives for adopting this policy. It is also frequently argued that the merits of decentralisation policy are desirable, but suffer in practice due to in part to the complexity of power and external impact of social, economic and political factors influencing perceptions.

According to Statutory Instrument 87 of 1992, major stake holders should have power in school management and such people include the school head, school teachers and the community represented by SDA/SDC (Wadesango 2011). Van Rensburg (2001) advocates that if schools are to remain in harmony with the community that they serve, they must allow for the participation of all stake holders in decision making. Rensburg further asserts that one forum for achieving this is to establish sit-based decision management committees comprising of parents and teachers. According to Morse et al. (1997), these committees may be directly involved in decision-making or serve in an advisory role to the principal. The rationale behind the involvement of these committees is to solve problems and make decisions that were previously the sole domain of management (Wall and Rinechart 1999). When parents are treated as consumers to whom the teachers are accountable, school boards are given significant power, as in the case of the United Kingdom and New Zealand (Kipsoi and Antony 2008). When on the other hand,

the emphasis is on partnership, parents, teachers and community leaders are more equal in terms of power and responsibility (Kogan 1992; Kipsoi and Antony 2008)

However, the current recruitment and selection framework in Zimbabwe is rather meaningless since schools are no longer allowed to recruit their own teachers. The responsibility which was once in the hands of schools was taken away by the government after it was noted that corruption, nepotism, favouritism and bribery were some of the problems associated with the decentralisation of this particular issue to school level. Therefore, the recruitment and selection of teachers is now centralised in Zimbabwe. Heads submit their requirements to the Ministry and teachers are deployed from District Offices. Schools have complained that at times they spend the whole term without certain subject teachers due to inefficiencies at the District Offices. There are times when schools get a wrong teacher all together or a teacher without the required subject combination. Schools are not happy with this arrangement.

Results of this study confirm what emerged from a similar study conducted in Kenya by Kipsoi and Antony (2008), which found that delegation of teacher recruitment to the school boards had caused a lot of controversy. School in certain districts refused to shortlist-qualified applicants who posed a threat to their identified candidates, while other schools kept the interview dates a secret so as to achieve their sinister motives. Other schools recruited candidates who did not meet the qualifications so long as they have a degree certificate with no relevant teaching subjects on their transcripts. Their study also established that the exercise was rife with irregularities, the question of the competence of the SDSs arose because the process of interviewing people for employment requires thorough understanding of professional as well as topical, socio-economic and political issues. It emerged that interviews were biased, tribal and corrupt and not based on merit.

The study also noted that some schools failed to attract competent and highly qualified teachers due to a number of reasons such as geographical location of the school, socio-economic status of the community, school environment and general performance of the school. A study conducted in Kenya by Aloo et al. (2011) concurs with the above assertions. In the Ken-

yan study, head teachers indicated that teachers would wish to associate with performing schools rather than non-performing ones because the performing schools encouraged staff development due to regular teacher promotions thus also conforming sentiments of Belmonte (2002). On conduciveness of school environment, Pearlman (2002) comments that teachers do not apply to schools located in communities that are hostile and insecure. The issue of school proximity is also supported by Allo et al. (2011) whose study established that the location of the school with regard to proximity to urban setting influenced the tendency of a number of teachers to opt for urban schools or peri-urban schools to enable them to pursue studies. However, this contradicts Carrol et al. (2002) as cited in Allo et al. (2011) who argued that teachers would prefer to work in rural areas than urban areas because life in towns is expensive. In rural schools, teachers are provided with free accommodation and they don't pay for water and electricity in most cases.

CONCLUSION

In Zimbabwe, many central education governors claim to have devolved power to local authorities, but the circulars that define this empowerment go to schools with red tape outlining bureaucracy requiring that school heads rubber stamp decisions imposed on them by District and Regional offices. In reality certain tasks and work have been transferred to schools but power and authority have been retained by the central government. However, communities are now demanding a greater say in how their schools are run and how teachers perform and governments are therefore encouraged to urgently look for ways to devolve authority for teacher management to different levels of the system. Schools should be allowed to recruit their own teachers with the help of SDA/SDCs. The process should be transparent and fair to ensure that the most qualified applicants get the jobs. The SDC/SDAs should be given guidelines on how to select candidates.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The study encourages the Public Service Commission to ensure that fairness and transparency prevail in the recruitment exercise of teachers. School development committees must be trained in order to participate effectively in

this exercise. The exercise should be devolved to schools.

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