

DISTANCE EDUCATION AND THE RURAL-URBAN PROFESSIONAL MIGRATION: IMPLICATIONS FOR EFFICIENCY

Richard BUKALIYA
Zimbabwe Open University
Marondera, ZIMBABWE

ABSTRACT

This present study sought to establish the reasons as to why teachers studying through the Zimbabwe Open University were in droves, forwarding applications for transfer to go and teach in peri or urban schools in the guise of distance education. The study sought to establish which aspects of the ZOU ODL mode gave rise to rural-urban teacher migration, what the perceived gains of urban residence by the migrating teachers were, what present and existing characteristics at the present school/station inhibited successful continuous development through open and distance learning and how best the problem of teacher migration due to wanting to study through open and distance learning could be solved. Since the current study was all about teachers' perceptions, the major research design adopted was the cross sectional survey which entailed obtaining data at a single point in time and using just one questionnaire and an in-depth/ethnographic interview schedule as data collection instruments. The population for the current study consisted of all the 255 primary and secondary school male and female teachers who had applied for transfer into or near Chegutu urban secondary or primary schools, indicating the need to pursue further studies with the Zimbabwe Open University as their major reason for lodging the transfer. They were on the Chegutu District Education Office 2006-2010 teacher transfer list. Out of the population of 255, 128, (50.2%) were sampled through the simple random sampling method. Results show that the unavailability of e-resources, library services internet and e-mail services in the locality of most rural schools paved way for dissatisfaction among the majority of teachers. A number of situational factors at the teachers' current schools were not conducive to study through distance education. The physical location of the respondents' schools had much bearing also on the desire to relocate. The majority of the schools were not easily accessible by road, the places were difficult to move in particularly for motor vehicles and floods sometimes marooned the teachers from the rest of the world. Some schools were secluded making it very difficult for the students to form study groups. Poor ODL organization and management practices also contributed heavily to teacher professional migration. Dates for tutorial were mostly inappropriate for the rural based teachers who were without transport or were officially engaged in their rural schools over the weekends. Poor postal services and in the rural set up as well as working full days were another source of contention giving the rural teacher the impetus to migrate. In view of these findings it was recommended that synergies be formed between the Ministry of Education and the Zimbabwe Open University in the interest of maintaining quality in schools and preserving the diminishing numbers of students at the Zimbabwe Open University.

Key Words: Distance education, professional migration, implications for efficiency.

BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

The supply of qualified teachers has been adversely affected in most Sub Saharan countries where retention rates are low for newly trained teachers or where significant numbers of teachers are being lost through HIV-AIDS or in rural areas which have difficulties in recruiting and retaining teachers (Perraton, 2001). As a saviour, distance education has been often been hailed as the answer to African governments' problems of educational

provision since it has improved the access to quality education with extensive and increasing use being made of it in teacher development globally (Robinson & Latchem 2003) and in post independent Africa in particular, where the demand for teachers outstripped the supply from the country's conventional colleges. It was, therefore, out of this consideration that most countries, in response, launched a number of unconventional approaches for training both graduate and non graduate teachers for both primary and secondary schools (Chivore;1992), in an attempt to equip all schools regardless of location with qualified teachers.

However, while distance education has come as a blessing to many marginalized communities which went without qualified teachers for time on end, a rather disturbing trend has started to take shape as furthering one's education for the already qualified and enrolling for undergraduate studies for those intending to get tertiary education through distance education, has been cited by the would-be transferees, as reason for the transfer from current rural stations to urban educational centers, a move that has deprived and depleted the already choking rural school of the appropriate human resources. A research by Nyakudzuka (2010) on the rural to urban migration by teachers revealed that out of the 180 respondents almost 50% of them indicated that their transfer or imminent transfer to or near an urban setting had been instigated by the desire to further one's professional qualification through distance education with the Zimbabwe Open University. However, it is worth noting that the Zimbabwe Open University being an open and distance learning institution, all tuition was going to be offered at a distance without the need to relocate. Literature is in abundance on the traditional reasons offered for one to transfer from one station to the other. However, open and distance learning as a cause for staff geographical mobility needs further investigation. It is, therefore, the intention of this current study to explore those factors linked to ODL being attributed to the migration of teachers from rural to urban schools, a situation that has caused a general decline in the quality of education being in rural schools to an extent that has resulted in some rural schools recording a 0% pass rate at both Ordinary and Grade seven levels (Interim Strategic Plan for the Ministry of Education, Arts, Sport and Culture; 2010).

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The current study aimed at

- establishing the link between the desire to undertake further studies through distance education and the rural-urban professional drift
- unearthing those problems associated with distance education for particular students or prospective students normally resident in rural schools
- bringing to the fore the students' concerns about studying through distance education whilst in remote rural areas.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The present study sought to answer the following research questions:

- Which features of the ZOU ODL mode are giving rise to rural-urban teacher migration?
- What are the perceived gains of urban residence by the migrating teacher?
- What present and existing characteristics at the present school/station inhibit successful continuous professional development through open and distance learning?
- How best can the problem of teacher migration due to wanting to study through open and distance learning be solved?

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Concept definition- What is distance education?

How distance education is best defined or differentiated from other educational approaches has been the subject of much debate. From the perspective of many educational technologists, distance education is "inexorably linked to technology" (Garrison, 1987). It is made possible at a distance by means of media which can cover long distances. In agreement, Portway & Lane (1994) assert the term to mean teaching and learning situations in which the instructor and the learners are geographically separated, and therefore, have to rely on electronic devices and print materials for instructional delivery. This is in direct contrast with 'direct education' or 'face-to-face education': a type of education that takes place with direct contact between lecturers and students. Distance education is, therefore, a planned and systematic activity which comprises the choice, didactic preparation and presentation of teaching materials as well as the supervision and support of student learning and which is achieved by bridging the physical distance between student and teacher by means of at least one appropriate technical medium (Delling; 1966).

What is rural –urban professional migration?

The term professional migration has been called by various terms or names. Synonymous to the concept are terms such as brain drain and geographical mobility of skilled manpower. For the purpose of this study all these terms are taken to mean the same but a distinction is presented between international brain drain and internal (rural-urban) professional drain. Internal rural-urban migration, according to Waugh (1990), is a process that can either be a voluntary or involuntary (forced) movement of highly skilled personnel from a rural set-up for a variety of reasons some of which could be social, political or economic. The definition spells out two major issues. Professional migration could be either voluntary or involuntary (forced). Waugh (1990) further asserts that voluntary professional migration arises from migrant's choice, wish or desire to move whereas with involuntary migration, the prospective migrant leaves due to pressure mostly external and due to the dissatisfaction with the present situation.

Another definition is offered by Dilworth (2007) who defines the term as the drifting of highly skilled citizens in the fields of health, education, sciences and engineering from one area to the other without crossing country boundaries. Similar to this definition is that given by Munowenyu and Pritchard (2004) who assert the term to mean the movement of the educated population within a country but without changing jobs, due to push-pull factors.

Both the above citations fall short of spelling out the point departure and the point of destination. However, it should be noted that the migration is to a large extent from rural to urban centres. Despite this oversight, the two authorities view internal labour mobility as movement from one place to another as long as it is within the borders of a given country. It can therefore be concluded that internal labour mobility needs to be specified in terms of where labour is migrating from and the intended destination. In order to distinguish internal brain drain from international brain drain, UNESCO (1991) defines international brain drain as an abnormal form of scientific exchange between countries, characterized by one way flow in favour of most developed countries. Chimanikire (2005) defines the term as the migration of professional people from one country to another for higher salaries or better living conditions. Accordingly, the situation depicted is tilted in favour of the developed countries thereby aggravating the existing disparities between two types of economies.

Therefore, unlike international labour mobility, internal (rural-urban) professional migration entails a process whereby skilled personnel such as teachers, doctors, nurses and Agricultural Extension officers, among others, desert rural areas in preference to urban work stations where conditions are attractive. This, therefore, is a form of brain drain from rural areas to towns and cities, voluntarily or involuntarily.

Theoretical Framework

Quite a significant number of theories have been advanced by researchers and economists on the factors that are believed to give rise to geographical mobility of labour. Among the most elaborate ones are theories by Todaro (1992), Lewis and Sharon Russell (2002). These models could help uncover the reasons as to why

people, in general, seek to relocate. Some such models of migration are discussed hereunder. However, theories of motivation as propounded by Abraham Maslow, McGregor, Hertzberg and others can also be applied to help unearth the causes of the rural-urban professional drift but these can be applied in other future researches to test their applicability to the problem at hand.

THEORIES OF MIGRATION

Todaro's Migration Model

The model assumes that professional migration is an economic phenomenon and thus economic considerations pave way economic decisions to migrate. With the manifestation of the potency to migrate, the prospective individual migrant sees the potential move to be quite a rational decision in economic terms. The model also assumes that differences in gains between urban and rural dwellers pave way for the drift. Todaro (1992) assumes that the migrating individual compares expected gains for a given time horizon in the urban area with rural benefits and therefore one may migrate if conditions in one area are more conducive than in the other area. Migration is seen, therefore, as a result of individual considerations that are rational in terms of benefits and costs accrued due to the psychological benefits to come due to the move.

However, the model may not be appropriate to answer the reasons for the drifts in the least developed countries (LDCs) as some tend to seek employment in the rural sector where the cost of living is low. It, therefore, fails to account for the reason why potential labour in LDCs still continues to drift to rural areas.

Furthermore, the LDCs employment opportunities may be hard to come by in urban set ups hence the drift is inadvertent as people get placed in the rural agriculture sector. However, the model may help answer the puzzle why some teachers in rural schools due to perceived gains in terms of the newly introduced teacher incentives (Director's Circular No 2 of 2009) in which urban teachers have tended to benefit more than their rural counterparts particularly those in poor rural communities. These have failed to pay the teacher incentives even in the form of agricultural produce or in kind and Minister of Education, Arts, Sport and Culture, Senator David Coltart advised that the incentives would soon be scrapped to avoid the disparities that have seen rural based teachers get nothing (Sunday Mail, 22 November, 2009). Almost similar to Todaro's model is the Lewis-Fei Model and this is discussed below.

THE LEWIS-FEI MODEL OF MIGRATION

The model postulates that any economic set up in underdeveloped countries, for which Zimbabwe is one, is characterized by two sectors which are traditional agricultural subsistence sector located in rural areas, where there is always a surplus of labour and the modern urban industrial sector. In this sector there is high productivity and the surplus labour in agricultural subsistence sector gets attracted to this the modern urban industrial sector and gradually moves into urban set up.

The primary focus of this theory is the existence and growth of employment due to high productivity in industry and the manner in which the labour force gets attracted to the urban industry (Waugh 1990). To a limited degree, the model may explain why some teachers get attracted to urban schools. Due to the existence of more resources in urban schools and the subsequent significant levels of academic achievement and pass rates, some teachers would, therefore, want to be associated with the high performing schools in urban schools, hence they transfer to such schools.

On the contrary, the Lewis-Fei Model may fail to justify the rural-urban mobility particularly given the fact that according to Lewis urban wages should have to be at least 30% higher than the average rural income to entice teachers to migrate to the urban school. This is because the Zimbabwe Public Service pay system is universal regardless of geographical location. As long as people are in the same job and grade, they receive the same

basic salary. A further contradiction would be the more incentives paid to rural based school teachers and other civil servants in rural areas in the form of rural allowances. One would have thought, therefore, that civil servants in rural areas would remain put due to those rural incentives that government used to pay before the introduction of the multi-currency system. Despite this weakness, however, the model is still significant explaining why other rural dwellers continue to migrate to urban areas (Todaro; 1992).

PREVIOUS RESEARCH STUDIES

Migration decisions are complex decisions where the professional teachers weigh numerous issues before deciding whether or not to move. While a substantially large number of factors have been attributed to the propensity to migrate, studying through distance education has of late been an oncoming factor most professionals attribute to their intended migration. The Tennessee Advisory Commission on Intergovernmental Relations (2000) carried a survey on ODL students intending to establish from them what the major factor was that had influenced their decisions to change schools. In a given a list of 32 factors, opportunities for professional advancement/degree or certification was ranked among the top ten factors that affected teachers' decisions to change stations (Tennessee Advisory Commission on Intergovernmental Relations; 2000). This automatically sends some signals that ODL, despite being a teaching and learning mode in which the instructor and the learners are geographically separated, some aspiring students may not develop their potential through ODL and, more so, most likely never to do so through other means that have traditionally been reserved for a few. It was behind this background, therefore, that this present study sought to establish which aspects of the ZOU ODL mode were giving rise to rural-urban teacher migration, what the perceived gains of urban residence by the migrating teachers were, what present and existing characteristics at the present school/station inhibited successful continuous development through open and distance learning and how best could the problem of teacher migration due to wanting to study through open and distance learning be solved.

PUSH/PULL FACTORS INHERENT IN ODL SYSTEM GIVING RISE TO THE PROPENSITY TO DRIFT TO URBAN OR PERI-URBAN SCHOOLS

Costs incurred as a result of long distances between student and regional centers

Distance education knows no geographical boundaries and this implies that the further one gets from the regional centre the more the indirect costs incurred to get education. It, therefore, means that distance education provision is especially difficult and costly in the rural areas where the need is greatest and requires problem-solving in particular contexts. However, the tendency by those offering the distance mode of delivery has been to shift the bulk of financial burden to the student especially where there is need to purchase technological gadgets for communication with those remotely placed. This has resulted in low retention rates as the affected students drop out in the face of failure to move into the vicinity of the regional centre. That being the case though, Craig and Perraton (2003) note that distance education has been and should continue to be used extensively for the continuing professional development of teachers in particular and seems to have the following advantages, an ability to reach teachers, who are often isolated, and provide them with professional development without taking them away from their home or moving them away from their current workplaces.

Difficult levels of modules and assignments

Providing teachers with learning and teaching resources where ever they maybe, is one of the major goals of distance education (Mattson, 2004; Moon, 2006; GCE, 2006). However, as Adler, Slonimsky and Reed (2002) teachers located in remote and isolated schools, with a poor knowledge base, struggle to rise to the demands of the programmes in which they are enrolled and appear to leave the programme with little added to their repertoire of subject teaching, mostly due to the difficult levels of their study materials. This struggle appeared most acute where teachers were working in very impoverished contexts. The majority of these teachers

struggled with syllabus content coverage in their subject (Adler, Slonimsky and Reed; 2002) as they suffer due to lack of colleague and instructor contact (Dillon, Gunawardena, and Parker; 1992).

Isolated environments

According to Jegede, Fraser & Fisher (1998), teachers often work in isolation from one another instead of exploiting and sharing their joint strengths due to their geographical isolation and they end up being bogged down hence may drop out of the programme due to lack of assistance. These, therefore advocate for a distance education programme that recruits students in pairs, teams and/or clusters; which requires team work in in-text activities and assignments; provides guidelines and support for student-led study groups and offers occasional face-to-face sessions at which cooperative and collaborative teaching and learning are modeled can go a long way towards breaking down the barriers between individual teachers, classrooms and schools. This probably helps to reduce the students` propensity to move closer to where they get assistance, mostly closer to the regional centre (Mattson; 2004).

PUSH/PULL FACTORS OUTSIDE THE ODL SYSTEM GIVING RISE TO THE PROPENSITY TO DRIFT TO URBAN OR PERI-URBAN SCHOOLS

Unavailability of traditional as well as e-resources and poor postal and communication services in the vicinity of work stations

The perceived absence of infrastructure, for example, availability of latest information and technology influenced geographical mobility of labour as those that are usually domiciled in difficulty prone areas feel the urge to migrate (Kaempf and Singh; 1987, Dillon, Gunawardena, and Parker, 1992). In a study that examined learner support systems in a state-wide instructional television program, Dillon, Gunawardena, and Parker (1992) noted that students listed the following factors as hindering their performance: Lack of instructor contact, unavailability of library resources and poor "courier service," (distribution of course materials to sites). Where problems of postal services do exist, students find themselves having to delay in receiving and sending assignments. The implication is, therefore, that the assignments are failed due to not having submitted within the deadline. Some may not receive important information in time, if they receive it at all (Dillon et al, 1992).

REMEDIES

Theory and practice has shown that remedies do exist for the problems bedeviling the rural teacher who opts for transfer in order to progress with studies through distance education. Some have advocated for technological change (Sewart, 1993), an innovation less likely in the least developed countries such as Zimbabwe. Others have suggested that distance education providers, such as Zimbabwe Open University should aim at creating a local student support services platform that take cognisance of the course materials, particularly given the entry level of the student (Agrawal, 1991; Sewart, 1993). The local student support service centre, apart from helping students in learning and comprehending the course materials, also is a forum for helping settling student queries (Agrawal, 1991) rather than travel to regional centres which are inaccessible to some of them. Perraton et al (2001) have advocated for the use of simple_communications infrastructure such as the use of radio technologies as used in Burkina Faso. Since most of Zimbabwe receives radio signals and simple radio sets being affordable even to the poorest teacher, this method can be adopted and teachers in the rural areas can get assistance on air on specific areas they need assistance in. In some more expensive innovations, televisions may be used to offer help to the struggling rural teacher who often finds himself or herself struggling with studies due to the isolation of his or her present workstation. This is taking place in support of school groups in Brazil (Perraton et al, 2001). Some have suggested the provision of postal library services (Bhatnagar and Saihjpal, 1996) in which students from remote areas are allowed to borrow books for a period of a month upon payment of a security deposit fee and some countries have introduced

mobile libraries but only in places reachable by road. However, this means an extra cost to the distance distant learner.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The present study adopted a mixed mode approach in which both the qualitative and quantitative paradigms were used. The quantitative aspect entailed obtaining quantitative data through questionnaires and describing, recording, analyzing and interpreting results through the use of statistical analysis. The qualitative approach entailed data collection using in-depth interviews in the schools under study. This qualitative approach assisted the researcher to obtain the *emic* (insider's) view of issues, events and situations that may help to tackle the rural-urban professional drift due to the need to study through the distance education mode.

The Research Design

Since the current study was all about teachers' perceptions, the major research design adopted was the cross sectional survey strategy which entailed obtaining data at a single point in time and using just one questionnaire or other data collection instruments (Fogelman in Coleman and Briggs;2004). Leedy (1997) argues that surveys are the best designs to adopt where perceptions, views and beliefs of subjects are sought, hence the researcher's option of the cross sectional survey.

According to Hutton (1990), the survey research is a method of collecting information by asking a set of pre-formulated questions in a predetermined sequence in a structured questionnaire, to a sample of individuals drawn so as to be representative of a defined population. That being the case, however, Fogelman in Coleman and Briggs (2004) argues that surveys need not be restricted to questionnaires only but also to unstructured and structured instruments such as interviews, hence the use of these two instruments in the current research.

Research Instruments and data gathering methods

The current study employed a multi-technique approach to data collection in order to obtain a holistic or total view of the subjects under investigation on issues of quality education. A combination of the questionnaires and in-depth/ethnographic interviews, as data collection instruments, was therefore, preferred in order to collect qualitative data. This enabled the facilitation of gathering valid and reliable data from the respondents over and above enabling triangulation to cross validate the validity and reliability of the solicited data. Twelve research assistants were recruited from a local technical college (where they are training in business studies) according to their original places of residence. These were trained on the basic data gathering and interviewing techniques. Data collection lasted over a period of three months (November through to January 2011). Hereunder, the results of the study are presented and discussed.

The Population

Best and Khan (1993:13) define a population as "any group of individuals that have one or more characteristics in common that are of interest to the researcher". These may be people such as all school teachers, all female teachers or schools to whom the findings of the study apply. The population for the current study consisted of all the 255 primary and secondary school male and female teachers. These 255 out of 371 teachers had applied for transfer into or near Chegutu urban secondary or primary schools, indicating the need to pursue further studies with the Zimbabwe Open University as their major reason for lodging the transfer. They were on the Chegutu District Education Office 2006-2010 teacher transfer list, needless to indicate that all these teachers were highly qualified because the policy in Zimbabwe dictates that untrained or temporary teachers do not transfer at their own wish.

The Sample and Sampling Procedure

A sample is a small proportion of the population selected for observation and analysis (McMillan and Schumacher; 1993, Best and Khan; 1993). Out of the 255 teachers on the transfer list, who wanted to study through ODL, only 128, (50.2%) were sampled through the simple random sampling method. Discs numbered from 1 to 255 were prepared and these numbers corresponded with the numbers occupied by the transferees on the list. The numbered discs were then mixed thoroughly and at each interval, a disc was picked, until a total of 128 respondents were obtained. However, the stratified random technique could have been employed in order to ensure that a diversity of categories such as male/female or primary school/secondary school teachers were proportionally represented in order to obtain a balanced representation of views.

PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The intent of the research was to determine the extent to which distance education was a contributory factor towards the decisions by rural based school teachers to transfer from one school in order to be employed in another within the same district or province. Data was obtained through interviews as well as questionnaires distributed to 128 teachers.

Table 1.1 Present highest qualifications held by respondents

QUALIFICATION	NUMBER	%
Certificate in Education	23	18
Diploma in Education	66	51.5
Bachelor`s Degree	37	28.9
Master`s Degree	2	1.6
TOTAL	128	100

Data form table 1.1 shows that all 128(100%) respondents were, by Zimbabwean standards, highly qualified teachers. However, Diploma holders were in the majority accounting for 66(51.5%) of the respondents, followed by certificate holders, 23(18%). There were 39 degree holders (at both Masters (1.6%) and Bachelors (28.9%) levels. It is these qualifications that these respondents sought to upgrade through the Zimbabwe Open University, hence their desire to migrate from their present stations.

Availability of e-resources and library services in the locality of the teachers

The results obtained from the survey show that the majority of the workstations do not possess the required paraphernalia conducive to further studies through distance education. Only a paltry 11(9%) out of 128 indicated they had access to computers, the majority of which had been donated through the benevolence of a local bank`s management after the equipment became obsolete at the turn of the century. Email facilities were available only to 21(16%) with the majority of 107(84%) not having access to this very important facility especially where distances mattered most. The same number of respondents 21(16%), had access to internet facilities while the majority 107(84%) did not. Those who had these facilities had them on their mobile cell phones through the On-the-go service offered by a local cellular phone provider, ECONET Wireless. However, for purposes of downloading bulky documents, the service was not appropriate, thereby crippling research efforts by the students. One hundred and five (82%) claimed they had no access to a library as opposed to only 23 (18%) whose present schools were located in the vicinity of libraries that could assist in assignments as well as reading for examinations and research projects. Dillon, Gunawardena, and Parker (1992) established that the absence of libraries and other services affected student performance and in some cases this resulted in the increase in drop outs.

Open and distance learning: organization and management practices attributed to teacher professional migration

Related to the management and organisation of the programmes, concern was raised on the timing of the tutorials. Fifty-four (42%) respondents indicated that tutorials were badly timed. The weekends during which these were held were mostly inappropriate for the rural based teachers who either went without transport for the particular weekend or there were official school weekend engagements in the rural schools. Tutorials were also poorly timetabled, according to 65(51%). Tutorials running into late Sunday afternoon meant the rural teacher would always run the risk of being absent from duty and thereby be reprimanded by the authorities. This may be compared to a situation in which students would receive no support from the institution and would merely be required to study on their own and sit for an examination. These rarely complete the course (Sewart, 1993). Assignment dates were also a push factor, as according to 79(62%), these were at times required during work days which would mean taking a day off to submit them to the regional centre. On the contrary, those in urban schools enjoy easy access to a reliable transport network to and from the regional centre. Better still, they are in double sessioning or hot sitting schools where some teachers are on duty from 7:30 a.m to 12:15 midday. Others takeover from 12:15 in the afternoon and continue up to 5 o'clock in the afternoon. This, therefore, means ample time for the urban teacher to read, prepare and submit assignments to the regional without inconveniencing the school children through absence from duty. The same can be said of examination timetabling. One hundred and four (81%) respondents felt compelled to transfer due to ill timing of these examinations. Normally semester examinations at the ZOU are held during May-June and November-December during which time schools are in session. Rural teachers would not normally have the chance to go and sit for the examination in the morning or afternoon and be at liberty to return for duty. In most instances, urban located teachers can write in the morning and return to school in the afternoon, or vice versa.

Another administrative shortcoming exposed by the present research was that of not availing modules and other resource material in time. Asked how this was a push factor to transfer to the urban area, the majority 121(95%) of the respondents lamented lack of libraries in the rural schools. Their counterparts in the urban schools could simply get the course outlines from the regional centre and read from books in the libraries, during the day or at night, a process that could be more expensive for the rural based since most urban libraries do not loan out their books even for overnight borrowing. Issuing of the CD-ROM to the students when they did not possess computers attributed to 123 (96%) wanting to move to urban areas where all the schools have computers and at least some form of reliable electricity power. According to Kangai and Bukaliya (2010), at the height of Zimbabwe's economic woes, the Zimbabwe Open University could not afford to produce modules hence opted for the cheaper CD-ROM. However, in rural schools where there is no electricity and in most cases computers do not exist, the CD-ROM has remained a useless piece of technology to the ZOU student. Many teachers might have returned to their studies after a long lay off (Sewart, 1993), so they may need a lot of constructive help which might not be available in rural set up. Some 125(97%) indicated unfamiliarity with the self-learning materials, the modules and assignments. They could ask for some guidance on assignment writing but with the rural set up, this attempt was to no avail. Faced with all these problems the rural teacher-cum ZOU student is compelled to file for a transfer to an urban or peri-urban school where conditions are nearly or are normally conducive to professional development through distance education.

Factors inherent in the current location impeding studies through ODL

The physical location of the respondents' schools had much bearing also on the desire to relocate. The places were not easily accessible road (84%) with physical features in the locality making the places difficult to move in, particularly for motor vehicles (69%). Floods sometimes isolated some of the areas from the rest of the world. Some schools, according to 122(95%), were isolated from the others making it very difficult for the students to form study groups so that students could assist each other in times of need. Full sessioning, according to 123(96%), made them want to migrate to town. Most schools in rural areas operate full time from 8 o'clock in the morning to 5 o'clock in the afternoon unlike in towns where there is double sessioning. This characteristic of urban education has, therefore, attracted the rural teacher who is short of time to study since

he/she is officially occupied for the better part of the day unlike the urban counterpart who is officially occupied for half a day.

Suggested remedies to curb brain drain resulting from the need to pursue professional development through open and distance learning

Asked to provide remedies which they thought would help reduce the propensity to migrate, 98(77%) respondents advocated for the establishment of rural libraries (Bhatnagar and Saihjpal, 1996) in schools which should be stocked with ZOU modules and other materials. One hundred and twenty-three respondents favoured decentralization of services to rural service centres where these services could be accessed with much ease and an equal number advocated for the electrification of the schools so as to be able to use communication technology such as computers for internet connection. There are, therefore, these pressures to provide a good service in rural areas both from the teachers based in the institutions as well as from the local communities, who also want the future generation to enjoy the benefits of the study centres. One hundred and twenty-five favoured the appointment of locally based mentors who would assist students in the hour of need. The creation of study centres in school clusters was advocated for by 122(95%) respondents. They felt the need for student contact as well as obtaining the much needed services in terms of technology (Pulist, 2004; Agrawal, 1991). The Zimbabwe Open University as a distance education provider, should therefore, aim at creating a local student support services platform that take cognisance of the course materials, particularly given the entry level of the student (Sewart, 1993). Special entrants and the weak students need to be assisted in appreciating and understanding module or course material. This would therefore suppress any motive either to move or dropout.

CONCLUSIONS

Based upon the above research findings, the following conclusions were drawn about the motives driving rural school teachers want to transfer in order to continue or to want to pursue further studies through distance education.

The unavailability of e-resources, library services internet and e-mail services in the locality of most rural schools paved way for dissatisfaction among the majority of teachers. The majority of the workstations do not possess the required paraphernalia conducive for further studies through distance education, hence teachers filed for transfers.

A number of situational factors inherent in the teachers` current location impeded studies through ODL. The physical location of the respondents` schools had much bearing on the desire to relocate. The majority of the schools were not easily accessible by road, the places were difficult to move in particularly for motor vehicles and floods sometimes marooned the teachers from the rest of the world. Some schools were secluded so much that the isolation made it very difficult for the students to form study groups so that they could not get in touch with each other.

Poor ODL organization and management practices also contributed heavily to teacher professional migration. Related to the management and organisation of the programmes, concern was raised on the bad timing of the weekend tutorials, examination dates and assignment submission dates. These were set on dates and days which were mostly inappropriate for the rural based teachers who either went without transport for the particular days or had official engagements during weekends.

Poor postal services and unavailability of courier services in the rural set up, as well as working full days were other sources of contention giving the rural teacher the impetus to migrate. With poor postal services,

communication proved complicated if not impossible, resulting in delayed assignments, thus the teachers subsequently failing courses.

Based on the assumptions of Todaro's and Lewis Fei's model of migration, it is concluded that the expected gains for a given time horizon in the urban area in terms its conduciveness to studying through distance education were enough to propel teachers to migrate to urban schools so that they could continue with their professional development through the ODL mode as did their urban counterparts.

IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The findings of the current research have implication for the future operations of the Zimbabwe Open University and the maintenance of quality education in the schools in and around Chegutu. Assuming the transfers are given the nod, most rural schools will go without trained teachers who are already in short supply due to international migration and a plethora of other reasons. This then impacts negatively on the quality of teaching and learning in the rural schools and helps perpetuate disparities between rural and urban schools. For the Zimbabwe Open University drop out and low attrition rates will continue to be experienced thereby failing to get education to the learner's doorstep.

The following are, therefore, some of the suggestions that if implemented may help solve the brain drain that has arisen in the name of professional development through the need to learn using the ODL mode.

- Formation and creation of convenient study groups and study centres where students get access to modern day technology and get to share ideas without the strain of movement to far off places in search of technology as well as assistance on how to answer assignments questions
- Design materials and course outlines that are user friendly and ease to understand but at the same time maintain quality
- Creation of synergies with the Ministry of Education's BSPZ Programme to provide library and reprographic services to students studying through distance education
- nomination and resourcing of a locally based programme coordinators in the reach of the students to offer assistance in assignment and examination preparation
- the provision of an appropriate venue for the on-site teaching in the rural schools in Chegutu's 34 clusters, for example renting classrooms from schools within which the students are normally resident to avoid movement to off school regional tutorials
- organization and funding of locally available and school mentors who hold the requisite qualifications; and
- organization and invigilation of examinations locally within the rented schools

All the above recommendations come with a cost to the university but such a cost is absorbed in the numbers that eventually come on board due to bringing open and distance learning to the doorstep of the rural students. However, the burden of curbing the rural to urban professional drift must be a multifaceted sectoral approach involving the Ministry of Education, Arts, Sport and Culture, the Zimbabwe Open University and other stakeholders to ensure rural schools are not depleted of the qualified teachers who flee these schools in the name of professional development through Open and Distance learning. Equipping the schools will enhance their appeal to the prospective migrant who then decides to stay put in light of the improved conditions of study. Without such synergic attempts, quality education for the rural population remains illusive in Zimbabwe while on one hand, for the Zimbabwe Open University, the possibility of achieving economies of scale becomes unwinable.

IMPLICATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

Issues that warrant further investigation as a result of them falling out of the scope of this current investigation but having arisen out of the foregoing research are suggested below:

- Determining the extent of the impact of teacher migration on quality education in rural areas as a result of the need to pursue further studies through distance education
- An analysis and evaluation of some distance education materials with the hope of simplifying the content therein for the benefit of the not so much gifted ODL learner who is very remotely isolated from other learners
- Assessing the possible impact of the rural-urban professional migration on both the quality of primary and secondary education in the rural schools

BIODATA AND CONTACT ADDRESS OF AUTHOR



Richard BUKALIYA is a Lecturer and Programme Coordinator teaching at the Zimbabwe Open University in the Faculty of Arts and Education. He is the Regional Coordinator for the Master of Education degree in Educational Management as well as Teacher Education diplomas and degrees. He holds a Masters Degree in Educational Administration, Planning and Policy Studies. He is also a Doctoral candidate of the Zimbabwe Open University. His research interests include issues in Distance Education and Primary and Secondary education.

Richard BUKALIYA
Zimbabwe Open University
Mashonaland East Region,
P.O. Box 758, Marondera, ZIMBABWE
E. Mail: bukaliar@yahoo.com
Tel: +26327921922
Cell: +263733686817/+263712501766

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