

The impact of extra lessons on the political environment: A case study of the three urban day high schools in Chegutu, Zimbabwe

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ABSTRACT

This study aimed at establishing the impact of extra lessons on the political field in Zimbabwean urban day high-density secondary schools. It was guided by the interpretivist perspective based on the interpretation of interactions and social meaning that teachers, learners, parents, and school inspectors assigned to the role of extra lessons on the political environment. The study was qualitative and thus aimed at reporting detailed views of informants. The multiple case study method was used as the focus was on three high-density high schools in Chegutu town. The researcher adopted the multi-technique approach to generate data, thus interviews and focus group discussions were used. Data saturation was arrived at after the involvement of 23 participants. These consisted of 8 teachers, 6 learners, 6 parents and 3 school inspectors. Findings from the study show that political expedience was one reason why extra lessons had been carried out with the blessing of some political players. From the academic outlook, politicians in favour of the extra lessons capitalised on them to gain continued existence in the political arena. While the political elite benefitted in the short term, through political expedience, in the long run, they stood to lose political support as this could also lead to civil disorder when many youths passed examinations but found no formal employment. Extra lessons made teachers generate extra income and created informal employment in many private colleges. This translated into low political tensions which were usually sparked by poor teacher incentives and high unemployment. Extra lessons paved the way for some meeting point among and between the different stakeholders and politicians still were guaranteed their votes regardless of whether they were for or against the extra lessons. Since there is evidence that most stakeholders were in favour of the extra lessons, it is prudent these lessons should continue to be carried out. Extra lessons also created informal employment in private colleges, and this has translated into low political tensions as teachers get some extra incentives, at the same time lowering the high unemployment of qualified teachers.

Keywords: Extra lessons, political environment, urban day high schools.

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INTRODUCTION

Extra lessons have become very popular to the extent that they have been incorporated in education sub-systems in most countries, globally, as learners take to the activity on a very large scale (Baker et al., 2011;

Bray, 2013). Most modern societies with well pronounced formal education systems have accepted and adopted the use of extra lessons that have come in different forms, in different countries (Bray, 2013). In East Asia, for

example, South Korean learners have enrolled in Hankwon, a term referring to cram schools, at a wider scale (Lee and Shouse, 2011). Extra lessons, also taking the form of supervised, outside mainstream classes, proprietary cram schools and revision schools have seen a rise in enrollment of learners taking up these lessons in Japan and Korea (Baker et al., 2011; Bray, 2013; Dang and Rogers, 2008). In North America, the situation has been the same as most countries have not been left out of the phenomenon. Davies (2014) states that in Canada, there has been a rising desire for extra lessons where the private tutoring business has surged even though parents who hire private teachers were generally satisfied with public education. Still in Canada, Davies and Aurini (2016) describe the exponential growth of the extra lessons as very significant and have depicted the growth as that of sprouting from “pushcart” business to a thriving cottage industry. Hussein (2007) remarks that there was a thriving black market in extra lessons in the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) which was characterised by very exorbitant prices as the practice had become scandalous and immoral. In the United Kingdom, the practice has also been flourishing with a lot of agencies sprouting across the country (Hussein, 2007). Hussein (2007), therefore, remarked that it was then difficult to estimate how many people were involved in the practice. Nearer home, in Egypt, 64% of the urban learners have been involved in extra lessons while 54% of the rural learners were also taking in the thriving activity which was termed *privates* or *durus Khususiyya*, where the lessons took place at the teacher’s or the learners’ homes (Hartmann, 2008).

In Zimbabwe, initiatives for good quality education have seen the mushrooming of private schools as demand for the highly regarded prestigious system of education becomes the envy of many, on one hand. On the other hand, the idea and attempt aimed at supplementing and complementing what has been learned in the formal school classroom through extra lessons have received a lot of attention from different stakeholders who include parents, learners, teachers, among other stakeholders, who have seen it fit and necessary to be involved in the extra lessons, one way or the other (Munikwa and Mutungwe, 2011; Tokwe, 2010) amidst dissenting views on the need for these extra lessons from other dissatisfied educational stakeholders especially the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education (MOPSE).

Extra lessons refer to supplemental, privately funded academic lessons outside of school (Bray, 2011; Munikwa and Mutungwe, 2011; Southgate, 2009; Tokwe, 2010). The type of educational intervention is privately sponsored by guardians or parents of learners seeking the type of education. Parents should decide with renowned teachers in specific learning areas to offer

tutoring to learners at a fee negotiated between the parties. While some parents have found it ideal for their children to go for these extra lessons, some of the learners have taken it upon themselves to be involved in these extra lessons (Tokwe, 2010). Teachers, on the other hand, have also found it very significant to engage in these activities. For that reason, the practice has become so intense in the Zimbabwean primary and secondary schools so much that people have started to debate on what role these initiatives may be playing in the mainstream Zimbabwean education system (Munikwa and Mutungwe, 2011; Tokwe, 2010).

Extra lessons were initially designed by MOPSE to assist learners with lagging aspects of their formal school learning areas. However, currently, the situation regarding the practice of extra lessons appears to have taken a sudden shift from the early and initial purpose. Learners of different ability levels and teachers, be they reputable or not, are now seen to be taking part in extra lessons. One can conclude that the practice is now a free for all undertaking regardless of one’s ability or reputation, hence a lot of debate has been generated including political discourse around the issue.

Over and above the new learning areas, in Zimbabwe urban day high-density secondary schools, hot-seating also affected the teacher-pupil contact time as each school was expected to run two sessions per day. This was especially the case in government-run urban day high-density secondary schools (Munikwa and Mutungwe, 2011; Tokwe, 2010). Hot seating meant that most, if not all, urban day high schools owned by the Zimbabwe Government operated a double session (Jinga and Ganga, 2012). Hot seating entailed half the learners and educators attending lessons in the morning while the other half did attend lessons in the afternoon, using the same school infrastructure and facilities and, at times, the same teachers who crossed over to the other session. One way of making up for the time deficit could have been to take part in extra lessons to make up for the formal teaching-learning hours reduced by half, as learners and teachers were now entitled to working for half a day. However, due to the much-debated popularity and potency of the extra lessons in various spheres of the school system, there appear political challenges to the practice. Hence this study aimed at exploring the political impact of the extra lessons in the three urban day secondary schools, in Chegutu, Zimbabwe.

Statement of the problem

Concern has been raised by some educators, heads of schools, and parents that there is a lot of pressure of work bearing on the teachers and learners because of the new and additional learning areas that are supposed

to be part of the school curriculum in the schools over and above the traditional learning such as English, Shona, Science, Mathematics, Family and Heritage Studies, Geography and Technical and Vocational subjects. This also put a lot of strain on the already congested timetable and the propensity of reducing the time for other examinable learning areas to accommodate these new learning. However, central to the issue, has been the political implications of the extra lessons. This study, therefore, sought to establish the political conversations surrounding extra lessons in Zimbabwean urban day high-density secondary schools, as perceived by various stakeholders.

Research questions

The study aimed at addressing the following two research questions:

1. What have been the positive impacts of extra lessons on the political environment in Zimbabwean urban high-density areas?
2. How have extra lessons negatively impacted the political environment in urban day high-density areas in Zimbabwe?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Lots of studies have been carried out on the academic impact of extra lessons (Bray, 2011). However, not much literature is available on the political role of extra lessons (Davies, 2014). However, the few related studies on the issue seem to suggest that there is indeed some role played by extra lessons in the political spectrum (Davies, 2014; Labaree, 2007; Witte, 2010). In a national survey carried out in Canada, Davies (2014) establishes that the parent respondents were motivated by less proximate beliefs in their children's involvement in extra lessons. Davies (2014) opines that parents were typically aligned to neo-liberal and conservative beliefs hence they would normally view school choice and education in general as commercialised and privatised services.

Davies (2014) supported by Labaree (2007), argues that such parents who seek private education among which are extra lessons, hold right-wing political stances. Witte (2010), in a concept paper, writes that parents who seek private education for their children are among the strong political elite who can sponsor reforms and political transformation meant to perpetuate ideologies that are in support of privatising and making education an economic commodity. This goes to suggest that with the little political muscle probably in the form of voting rights by teachers, parents and some learners, these

stakeholders could help in bringing about political reforms when sponsored to do so by the political heavyweights.

That being the case though, such governesses were not expected to mix with the adult members of the family in which they offered lessons. They would dine with the children, including those they taught but were not supposed to engage in a lot of discussions with the parents or the guests who visited the household. Despite the good and appreciated work they did in teaching the children, these ladies were poorly remunerated. This could have stemmed from the fact that despite the high demand by families for governesses to educate their children, there was a very large supply of qualified women for the same job.

Added to the idea of having governesses, those girls that attended public schools had chaperones that took them to school and sat beside them during class lessons. Each girl had a chaperone who sat with her during the lessons (Garner, 2005). However, these positions were highly prestigious and were only filled in by very important and well-educated women. These women provided extra lessons to the girls after the normal formal school lessons (Bray, 2009). All these attempts were made to preserve the political identity and culture of the elite who felt mixing and mingling with the general public would erode their political identity. To that effect, extra lessons were provided by trusted and well-vetted individuals who would not defile the ethos and values of the political elite.

The same cannot be said of the socialist states and most of the countries in Eastern Europe. Silova and Bray (2006) state that in the former socialist states, the school was an ideal and flawless institution, thus private tutoring could be interpreted as a serious imperfection of the state education system, eroding the socialist myth of free and uniform education for all. However, upon the realisation that the socialist education could not compete with the education systems of other nations on the international scene, the elite, mostly party officials, and representatives of intelligentsia, hired tutors for their children, while children from the relatively poor families and in rural areas had no access to tutoring. Contrary to the situation in the socialist states, the scenario in mixed economies has seen children from all walks of life getting involved in extra lessons; hence there is a need to establish the link between the extra lessons and the prevailing political dispensation in Zimbabwe.

METHODOLOGY

Research paradigm

This study aimed at capturing the views of teachers, learners, parents, and school inspectors on the role of

extra lessons in the political environment in Zimbabwe through a holistic and well-rounded approach from these insiders who have lived with the phenomenon of extra lessons. For that reason, interpretivism was the most appropriate choice of paradigm. Thus, the study on extra lessons is guided by the interpretivist perspective based on the interpretation of interactions and social meaning that teachers, learners, parents, and school inspectors assign to the role of extra lessons on the political environment (Creswell, 2013; Gialdino, 2009). The study was rooted in the qualitative research approach. This was a result of analysing the views by Starman (2013), among others that interpretivism, phenomenology and constructivism are some of the paradigmatic basis for qualitative research approaches.

Research approach

The study was a qualitative inquiry aimed at understanding a social or human problem, based on building a complex, holistic picture, formed with words, reporting detailed views of informants, and conducted in a natural setting (Creswell, 2013; Flick, 2011). Being a qualitative study, the focus was on the use of data generation methods such as in-depth interviews and focus group discussions, which resulted in a narrative, descriptive account of a setting (Parkinson and Drislane, 2011). The study was interested in understanding the meaning people have constructed, that is, how people make sense of their world and the experiences they have in the world (Merriam, 2009) about the impact of extra lessons on the political environment in the Chegutu, Zimbabwe. The behaviour of the participants, that is, teachers, parents, school inspectors and learners, were studied in their natural settings (the schools and the community in which these schools were located) attempting to make sense of the phenomenon of extra lessons in terms of the meanings the participants provide to them. Responses by participants were, therefore, examined in greater detail and depth (Creswell, 2013, Cohen et al., 2007).

Research design

The multiple case study method was used because the study involved more than one unit of analysis as the study gave attention to three high-density high schools. The study aimed at gaining an in-depth analysis of the political impact of extra lessons; hence the focus was on these multiple sites (Neuman, 2014). To add to this, multiple sites provided the study with large and diverse samples with enough evidence to detect in the data what role was being played by extra lessons from the various

participants.

Methods of data generation

The researcher was the key instrument as he had to administer the research instruments in person. Data was generated by the researcher himself through two instruments. Qualitative studies allow the inclusion of many kinds of data collection and analysis techniques thus qualitative researchers generate multiple forms of data, based on multiple sources (Creswell, 2013; Yin, 2014). This study adopted the multi-technique approach to obtain a holistic or total view of the participants' perceptions on the role of extra lessons in high-density secondary schools in Chegutu urban (Creswell, 2013; Tashakkori and Teddlie, 1998). As suggested by Drew et al. (2008), the researcher adopted the multi-technique approach to enable methodological triangulation which involved using more than one method to generate data. Thus, the study used interviews and focus group discussions for data generation.

Research participants

Participants of interest to the study comprised, teachers, parents, learners, and Schools Inspectors. As a qualitative study, 23 participants made it into the study. The researcher started off having in mind a kick-start sample of 30 participants. However, data saturation was arrived at with 23 participants who provided enough data that the researcher deemed adequate to provide the much-needed data for the qualitative study. The kick-start sample of 30 was premised on the view that qualitative studies focus on the experiences of the few with the hope of inferring aspects of a phenomenology involving many (Creswell, 2014). The 23 participants from where data were generated consisted of 8 teachers, 6 learners, 6 parents and 3 school inspectors. The researcher aimed at obtaining specific data related to the practice of extra lessons in urban day high-density secondary schools. With that in mind, only those involved and experienced the phenomenon was of interest to the study. That being the case, the study adopted the critical case sampling strategy which targeted only those teachers and learners that were involved in extra lessons.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

From the results obtained through interviews and focus group discussions, there appeared to several findings some of which were positive while others were negative.

The positive impact of extra lessons on the political environment

Political expedience

According to the participants' views, political expedience is one reason why extra lessons have been carried out with the blessing of some political players. Because extra lessons are paving the way for many learners to pass their examinations and making it to tertiary institutions, politicians are receiving more of the credit in their constituencies, for the undertaking which they support through encouraging learners to take part in and in some cases, even paying for. Mr. James, a teacher at school S2, indicated thus:

There has been a remarkable increase in academically and professionally oriented people who can create employment and assist in the development of urban areas due to attainment of professional skills after having excelled well in their academic work due to extra lessons, to the advantage of the political setup which receives credit.

Mr. James' use of the phrase "*the political setup which receives credit*" implies that extra lessons are benefitting the politicians. It is from the academic outlook that the politicians who are in favour of the extra lessons capitalise on to gain continued existence in the political arena, more so in their areas of jurisdiction. However, Mr. James, feels that the scenario whereby too many youths pass mostly owing to the extra lessons also creates a "*time-bomb for national government*" as many who could not have anything to do were easily swayed by political elites for their goals. The expression "*time-bomb*" shows that while the political elite benefits in the short term, through political expedience, in the long run, they may lose political support as this can also lead to civil disorder and eventual loss of power. Political expedience is also achieved where there is employment created by teachers who teach informally. Unemployment is a negative phenomenon that might discredit the political elite. These are the sentiments expressed by Mr. Sango who states that since the extra lessons provided room for teachers to generate more income, they also create informal employment in many private colleges, thus the same has translated into low political tensions which were usually sparked by poor teacher incentives and high unemployment. Where there is a lot of employment, political upheavals tend to reduce for the benefit of the politicians.

Some politicians are seeking political expedience through the extra lessons by the sponsorship of some learners in the local community. Mr. Tsuru, a teacher at

school S3, for example, had this to say:

Some of the educated politicians are in support of these extra lessons, for example, I have this other politician, is an aspiring politician, councilor in my area, at one point he was funding two students from a neighbouring school so that they could attend these extra lessons. And I think positively he had seen the impact of these extra lessons on other learners in the location.

The phrase "*an aspiring politician*" demonstrates one who is looking for favours from the electorate by providing fees for learners as reflected in "*funding two students*". That is presumably why, according to Mr. Sango from school S2, some leaders in the political circles even have their children attending extra lessons, so as for them to be seen to be associated with those that they would approach in future for votes, come election time. From another dimension, as experienced by Mr. Owens, also a teacher school S2, the "*electorate demanded accountability of the prospective political representatives*" and extra lessons were doing well for those who were vying for political positions as they enlightened them so that they were better placed to deal with the demands of the electorate. In this way, the extra lessons are a measure of the success or failure of the local politicians to deal with matters affecting the local community.

Some of the councillors and the MPs, among others, seem to support the extra lessons, as viewed by most parents. For example, participant parent Mr. January, whose son attends school at school S2, had this to say:

...judging by what is taking place, you find that even councillors in the community, people like police officers and so on, they have their relatives or themselves going for extra lessons. It should be something that is taking place and it's known and if all the people are going, they are sending their relatives, they are sending their children, it means something that is accepted.

The expression from the above excerpt "*have their relatives or themselves going for extra lessons*", goes to show that some of the politicians and even those who are supposed to maintain law and order, such as police officers, to a large extent, support the extra lessons. For that reason, the participant does not see anything negative about extra lessons in the political environment because "*all the people are going*" (to attend) and it has become something everybody knows about as "*something that is accepted*". These views seem to resonate well with those held by Ms. Ndumo who indicates that, generally, people do not care about extra lessons and even the politicians and their children are

having the extra lessons. This demonstrates that extra lessons have paved the way for some meeting point among and between the different stakeholders who see it fit to send their children for the extra lessons despite the ban by MOPSE. Ms. Ndumo also goes on to say, "...whether or not, the ban of extra lessons does not have any harm on those who in power". This shows that it does not matter much and the pronouncement that they are illegal does not affect one's political inclination. To that extent, politicians are still guaranteed their votes regardless of whether they are for or against the extra lessons.

On the same issue, Mr. Oliver whose child is a learner at school S3, remarks that "*it is a mixed bag*". As some of the councillors tried to garner support by discouraging them as being an extra burden for the parents, others garner support by encouraging the practice because they feel the extra lessons are there to compliment what learners would have done and thus covering up for the missing link. According to Mr. Oliver, those who want to gain political support through discrediting extra lessons, feel the extra lessons are a waste of resources, whereas those in favour have argued that time allocated for subjects at school and the teachers who were teaching in the schools were inadequate. Mr. Oliver put it thus:

They are saying time is inadequate because of so many subjects they are supposed to be done especially with the updated curriculum. A lot of subjects have been introduced so for them to be able to cover the syllabus for the core subjects, it has proved to be very difficult especially when you are looking at some of these co-curricular subjects. Here, we have some mass displays, P.E and if your child is very good at that, it may mean that the child might be away for quite several days if not weeks. So, they have seen it fit that it is paramount that some extra lessons should be instituted. They should send these learners to some extra lessons so that at least they will cover, up for the time lost in doing certain things.

From the excerpt, the politicians are in favour of the extra lessons seem to be aware of the inadequacy of time as raised in other excerpts earlier on and this is shown by their remark "*time is inadequate*". They further proffer the arguments that there is a whole new curriculum that has had no corresponding increase in the time allocated to the learners despite learners having to be absent from the classroom attending to sports as indicated by "*may mean that the child might be away for several days if not weeks*". They, therefore, show their support for extra lessons as indicated in the remark "*should send these learners to some extra lessons so that at least they will cover, up for the time lost in doing certain things*".

Mr. Oliver states that those against extra lessons argue that "*the government is paying teachers and time is also adequate*" but to some, this is not the correct position as things stand. However, there could be some sinister motives by parents who are unable to pay for the extra lessons, to have them politically discredited, through the involvement of influential politicians. A view held by Mr. James seems to suggest that those detesting the extra lessons were feeling the pinch in paying for those that could not afford, hence they were against the extra lessons. Mr. James remarked as follows:

On one side, they have been accepted with wide stretched hands due to high pass rates in the schools and on the other side, there has been pressure on the politicians such as councillors to pay for extra lessons for children from the communities so that as times goes on, they are elected back into office.

The political players who do not want the extra lessons could be finding it difficult to sponsor the extra lessons as shown in "*has been pressure on the politicians such as councillors to pay*". It implies if they fail to do so, the communities will not see them as doing enough for the less privileged. However, where they cannot pay, they resort to discrediting the extra lessons because they still need the electorate as reflected "*elected back into office*".

Sharing his opinions on the political role of extra lessons, Ben a learner from school S2, indicates that the Member of Parliament (MP) is in favour of the extra lessons to get political mileage. He put as follows:

The MPs are for the extra lessons because they want to get votes during elections. At school, when we were in grade seven extra lessons were banned but now the government is no longer strict about it. They need votes. Some lessons are done at school during holidays, next year is 2018, it is possible because, during the previous elections in 2013, those who were in form 4 had their fees for extra lessons paid for by the MP because he needed to be voted for by the people.

With elections being held after every five years as stipulated by the Zimbabwean constitution, "*they want to get votes during elections*". There is hope by the local MP to make use of the extra lessons as a campaign tool to be elected back to the office as he has done it before as shown in "*during the previous elections in 2013, those who were in form 4 had their fees for extra lessons paid for by the MP*". The MP thus dared to spend funds in paying for the extra lessons, especially for those who were about to sit for their examinations in 2013. Due to

arguments for and against extra lessons, it still can be inferred that both groups of politicians are bent on satisfying a specific group of potential voters, so they get political support and get elected into office or perpetuate their stay in political positions, hence substantiating the claim that extra lessons are being used for political expedience (Garner, 2005).

The negative impact of extra lessons on the political environment

Fanning of division among politicians, parents, and teachers

Participants also view extra lessons as having created divisions and disagreements among politicians, teachers and parents. According to Mrs. Nhari, a teacher at school S1, extra lessons have divided politicians as some support the idea while others do not. Mrs. Nhari shared his experiences by saying:

They are divided. Some say they should go on and some say teachers should teach at school because they are being paid by the government. Why should parents and government both lose money for the learners especially when the teachers are being paid to teach the children? So, there is division in that sense.

The statement “*They are divided*”, goes to show that extra lessons have become a source of division among the various players. The division emanates from the view that teachers are getting salaries and yet they need extra payments from the parents. This has been supported by Mr. James who remarks that those who view extra lessons with caution complain of the high fees they cannot afford to pay; hence some political leaders viewed the extra lessons negatively as the community demanded funds from them to fund such lessons in return for votes. Some politicians could regard this as blackmail because parents and guardians would only guarantee votes during national elections in return for funding of these extra lessons. According to Mr. Owens, who teaches at school S2, extra lessons create divisions between the parents and teachers as well as the political leadership. This is seen in the mixed opinions expressed by the stakeholders. Mr. Owens indicated thus:

There are mixed opinions on the extra lessons. One thing I noticed not necessarily with councilors, but the political leadership within the community is that when we talk of extra lessons, they sought to argue against such extra lessons indicating that we are giving a burden to the

parents. Government must make sure that the teachers provide adequate teaching in the schools. If you provide extra lessons, then you are saying the government is not doing its part. They are not happy in one way or the other when it comes to extra lessons even though of course some of them are sending their children for extra lessons.

The phrase “*mixed feelings*” demonstrates people are not in agreement; hence they are divided over the issue of having the extra lessons. Further supporting the view that there is no agreement, the phrase “*some of them are sending their children for extra lessons*” implying others are not because they are not in favour of these extra lessons possibly because “*it is the duty of government to make sure that the teachers provide adequate teaching in the schools*”. Another belief by Mr. Sango was that the tension among the different players is a result of teachers *skirting from the formal duties in pursuit of earning ancillary income* from extra lessons. This leads to poor service delivery by teachers in the mainstream education system and culminates into political concern as politicians fear for their positions if the extra lessons are left to continue unchecked.

Divisions created by extra lessons are made clear in the views shared by Mr. Sango, who argues that *there was not much consensus* that has been reached by the different stakeholders. The phrase *not much consensus* demonstrates that people disagree over extra lessons. According to Mr. Sango, this is further reflected in the Zimbabwean Parliamentary debates where some lawmakers have tried to ban the extra lessons while others just held neutral ground, thus he thinks there is no consensus on the position regarding extra lessons, although most parents had been supportive of extra lessons. There was, therefore, a division of opinions on the extra lessons.

The conflict between teachers and politicians is also alluded to by Mr. Tsuru, a teacher at school S1, who felt the politicians are inciting the parents against the teachers. Mr. Tsuru had this to say concerning the acrimony created because of the teachers offering extra lessons:

Looking at the political situation in our country, some politicians are even de-campaigning us as we are offering these extra lessons because they think we are reaping off parents. Some of them think that we are sacrificing students at schools so that at least we draw them for extra lessons at our houses, where we are offering these extra lessons. So, some of the politicians are trying to discredit us especially taking cognisance of the fact that parents don't want to pay because they don't have the money. So, politicians are

capitalising on that so that parents can turn against us as we are offering these extra lessons. They think it's very unfair because we are offering a service and most students are benefiting from that.

The phrase “*de-campaigning us*” shows that there is bad blood between teachers and politicians. Further, that “*politicians are trying to discredit us*” reflects on teachers and politicians being divided to the extent of mobilizing parents to turn against them as implied in “*so that parents can turn against us*”. According to Mr. Zhou, the divisions among the different players are a result of the view that extra lessons have been a very emotional subject to both the education system and the community. The participant indicated that the community leadership, which included the political leadership had been *very inconsistent in the manner in which extra lessons are handled*. This is seen in several shifts in terms of how the extra lessons have been and several times with the bans being lifted. Mrs. Nhari sums up the divisions among the various stakeholders because of the extra lessons saying:

There is an outcry. The various stakeholders complain that teachers should do their work because they are being paid by the government. Why should parents lose a lot of money to the payment for extra lessons? They are sort of divided. So, some say those extra lessons should stay because children will pass at the end of the day.

The narrative proffered by Mrs. Nhari shows that there has never been an area of agreement among the different stakeholders as indicated by the term “*outcry*”. The acrimony is also demonstrated in the phrase “*are sort of divided*”, bringing out the idea that the various players seem not to agree on the way forward. If anything, the extra lessons had brought about disagreements among the different stakeholders, with some advocating for their removal while others thought they were necessary for remedying the inadequacies of the formal school system (Davies, 2014; Labaree, 2007). For that reason, extra lessons seemed to bring about disunity among the various political players who include parents, teachers, learners and politicians. For example, where staff associations such as ZIMTA and PTUZ advocated for the extra lessons, MOPSE was seen to be against them, especially those that were initiated privately by the teachers.

Tarnishing the image of the political elite

Extra lessons, from another perspective, have been seen

to be tarnishing the image of the political elite. Extra lessons are viewed in a bad light as they create an impression that formal education has shortcomings. For that reason, some groups of political players do not support the extra lessons, and they see the extra lessons in a bad light. According to the views expressed by Mr. Tsuro, “*extra lessons portray the government in the negative light*” as urban dwellers point their fingers at the political dispensation as negating the mainstream education system. The phrase “*in a negative light*” highlights the issue that the urban dwellers feel the government is not doing enough for mainstream education. This forces the parents to look for assistance outside of the mainstream system to augment what is done in the formal school system. The demand for extra funding makes the urban dwellers find it difficult to support the current political elite hence they do not always vote for them.

Creating social polarisation and stratification among citizens to the disadvantage of the politicians

According to Mr. Oliver, extra lessons are “*creating social classes that are being viewed by politicians as working against them in the political playfield*”. This could be the case given that while those who are affording, mostly, the middle and high classes feel no strain in the payments and eventually have nothing to do with the politicians and the politics of the day. The extra lessons are, therefore, creating social polarisation and stratification among citizens, much to the disadvantage of the politicians. As argued by Mr. Jones, some politicians view extra lessons with suspicion as they think teachers are after money and they, therefore, view the extra lessons as being against the policy of education for all because only those who can afford, are entitled to attend. The politicians who are against extra lessons argue that they paved way for social stratification as only those capable of paying to attend the lessons (Bray, 2011).

Major findings of the study

The following are some of the major impacts of extra lessons on the political environment:

- Political expedience was one reason why extra lessons had been carried out with the blessing of some political players.
- From the academic outlook, politicians who were in favour of the extra lessons capitalised on them to gain continued existence in the political arena, in their areas of jurisdiction.
- While the political elite benefitted in the short term,

through political expedience, in the long run, they stood to lose political support as this could also lead to civil disorder when many youths passed examinations but found no formal employment.

- Extra lessons provided room for teachers to generate more income and created informal employment in many private colleges, thus this translated into low political tensions which were usually sparked by poor teacher incentives and high unemployment.

- Extra lessons paved the way for some meeting point among and between the different stakeholders and politicians were still guaranteed their votes regardless of whether they were for or against the extra lessons.

- Some stakeholders who wanted to gain political support through discrediting extra lessons felt the extra lessons were a waste of resources since the government was paying teachers and teaching time was also adequate.

- To some extra lessons created divisions and disagreements among politicians, teachers, and parents as some of the politicians were inciting the parents against the teachers.

- Extra lessons, from another perspective, were tarnishing the image of the political elite as they were viewed in a bad light by creating an impression that formal education had shortcomings.

- The extra lessons also created social polarisation and stratification among citizens to the disadvantage of the politicians as the middle and high classes felt no strain in the payments and eventually had nothing to do with the politicians and the politics of the day as opposed to the have nots who could not afford to pay for the lessons.

CONCLUSIONS

From the above findings, it can be concluded that:

- Some political players use extra lessons for political expedience as they have come out in support of the lessons.

- Politicians who in favour of the extra lessons capitalise on them to gain continued existence in the political arena, in their constituencies.

- The political elite stands to lose political support, in the long run, when many youths pass examinations but find no formal employment on the job market after passing.

- There is low political tension which is usually sparked by poor teacher incentives and high unemployment due to teacher involvement in extra lessons.

- Some politicians discredit extra lessons as a waste of resources since the government is paying teachers in the formal system.

- Extra lessons create divisions and disagreements among politicians, teachers, and parents as some of the politicians get to incite the parents against the teachers.

- Extra lessons tarnish the image of the political elite as they are viewed creating an impression that formal education has shortcomings.

- The extra lessons also create social polarisation and stratification among citizens to the disadvantage of the politicians as the middle and high classes feel no strain in the payments and eventually have nothing to do with the politicians and the politics of the day as opposed to the have nots who cannot afford to pay for the lessons.

RECOMMENDATIONS

From the conclusions, the study recommended that:

- Since there is evidence that most stakeholders were in favour of the extra lessons, it is prudent these lessons should continue to be carried out.

- There is also a need for ideas that will help solve issues of social polarisation and stratification among citizens as the middle and high classes.

- A model of operationalizing extra lessons that is acceptable to all parties could be worked out so that the practice is formalized for the benefit of all.

- Policy measures could also be adopted for the introduction of extra lessons in secondary schools.

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