

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

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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.