

The Effects of Economic Instability on Secondary School Students in Zimbabwe: A Case of a Province

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of the study was to analyse the effects of economic instability on secondary school students in decentralised secondary schools in Mashonaland Central Province, Zimbabwe between 2000 and 2017. Previous studies in Zimbabwe and elsewhere have shown that students in secondary schools were negatively affected by economic instability. This study adds to this literature by using habitus as a conceptual framework. This was a qualitative study which made use of a multi-case research design. Data was collected using focus group discussions, interviews and document analysis. Eight research sites in the form of secondary schools in four districts were used. Data analysis was done using theoretical prepositions guided by research objectives and research questions. Data presentations was characterised by quotes of participants. Trustworthiness based on dependability, credibility, transferability and conformability formed the basis of quality assurance measures. The study revealed that economic instability had negative results in the field of secondary schools in the province. Economic instability negatively affected learning activities of students. In addition, economic instability affected secondary school students psychologically. Economic instability affected relations among the students and other secondary school actors by aggravating already existing contestations amongst them. In addition, students had a shortage of resources to use in schools. Economic instability worsened school dropouts and the problem of child marriages. More worrying was that secondary school students had shortage of food due to economic instability. The study has shown that decentralised secondary schools found it difficult to solve the problems introduced by economic instability especially when the instabilities occurred within the difficulties of the broader Zimbabwean context. It is therefore recommended that students in decentralised secondary schools should be assisted with counselling services and resources to withstand economic challenges. Further similar research is recommended for other provinces in the country.

Key words: economic instability, decentralised schools, habitus, effects, school relations

INTRODUCTION

The economy of Zimbabwe recorded a positive growth between 1980 and 1990 as pointed out by Mazingi and Kambidzi (2011:328) who said that the “first decade of independence witnessed an average growth rate of about 11%.” But as the first decade was coming to an end the country began to experience some economic problems which resulted in the government resorting to the Economic Structural Adjustment Program (ESAP) as prescribed by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank (WB) (Ncube, 2000, Murisa, 2010). The results of ESAP were generally negative especially for provision of social services like education and health as citizens were now required to pay for these in full without the state subsidizing as before (Murisa, 2010). The economic situation was worsened by worker retrenchments in both the public sector and private sector as a result of ESAP (Ncube, 2000, Murisa, 2010). The second decade of independence also experienced other problems which exacerbated the whole economic situation: droughts,

the land reform program, the involvement of the Zimbabwe army in the civil war in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and gratuities for the war veterans which had not been budgeted for (AfDB/OECD 2003, Murisa, 2010).

The Zimbabwean government in the 1990s introduced measures based on structural adjustment programmes as advised by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank (WB). The measures led to far reaching consequences on how government institutions were run. One such measure introduced in education was decentralisation. The Zimbabwean government embraced structural adjustment programmes as advised by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank (WB) to improve the economy which was experiencing a downturn. One measure taken by the government was to cut costs in the provision of social services such as education. The government moved from a highly centralized school system (Reynolds cited in Chikoko, 2006) to a decentralized education system epitomized by giving power to School Development Committees (SDC) in non-government schools and to School Development Associations (SDA) in government schools. Thus, by a legal instrument, Statutory Instrument 87 of 1992, each primary and secondary school ran its own financial and other governance issues. The main government roles in schools that remained were the payment of teachers' salaries and standards control. Besides following the advice of the IMF and the WB, the Zimbabwean government hoped that a decentralized school system would also reduce costs, improve pass rates, help develop schools and improve the quality of education.

Elliot et al (2013:461) refer to economic instability as income shocks, asset shocks, home loss and asset poverty. Economic instability is characterized with severe macro-economic instability, reform that is slow, weak institutions, domestic and international burdens, dominant informal sector and crime (Dimitrov, 1999). This is worsened by absence of rule of law, absence of checks and balances and competition, and of a social safety net (ibid). The end results of all these aspects of economic instability are loss of value for assets, low life expectancy, tension in society, insecurity and loss of will to reform (ibid).

Okpala and Jonsson (2011:88-91) identify corruption, crime, misuse of official power, urbanization and literacy rates as some of the causes of economic instability. Possible consequences of economic instability on families include "risk of marital dissolution, family disorganization, physical abuse, child neglect, family breakdowns, frustration, anger, general demoralisation and health problems" (Conger et al, 1992:526). Elliot (2013:469) discovered that "early economic hardships in a child's life, especially before eleven years, can have a negative effect on a child's academic achievement."

The economic history of countries is characterized by economic instability indicated by depressions and booms, unemployment, major depressions and minor slumps and inflation (Claessens and Kose, 2013). The history of the countries in the world is characterized by "crises and collapse" (Grinin, 2012:126). Grinin goes on to add that instability in countries is inevitable and is a result of systems and evolution. Zimbabwe had its share of economic challenges since independence but the challenges from about 2000 have been acute and long standing leading to the country having the highest inflation in the world in 2008. Another disturbing feature of the economic problems in the country is the unwillingness of the outside world to assist because of a number of reasons such as governance issues, issues to do with the land reform or failure to service loans. Hence economic instability has dragged on for a long period which had an impact on social institutions such as education.

The problem of economic instability is a well-known phenomenon the world over. Fukuda-Parr (2013) suggests that the economic history of nations is characterized by depressions and booms. There is an abundance of literature on economic instability as researched by economists (see for example Sameti et al, 2013; Willianson, 2010; Wolf et al; 2014; Fakudu-Parr et al, 2013; Elliot et al, 2013; Grinin, 2012). While literature on economic instability is available it has been difficult to find literature that relates to the impact of economic instability in schools or to secondary schools. Literature that has a relation to this study is the work of Willianson (2010) who researched the impact of economic problems on schools. Then there is also

research by Holladay & Lockette (2009) whose study was on teaching in downtown schools, with a particular focus on the effects of economic crisis on children and families. The study by Elliot et al (2013) was on the effects of economic instability on children's educational outcomes. In Zimbabwe studies on the impact of economic instability on schools are available but did not use habitus as a tool of analysis. There is literature which indicates that there is economic instability in Zimbabwe. For example, Mzumara's (2012) study on the overview of Zimbabwe's economic environment shows the magnitude of the economic crisis. The study by Kramarenko et al (2010) shows challenges and policy options after hyperinflation. The study by Chitiyo & Kibble (2014) on Zimbabwe's international re-engagement also gives details of economic crisis Zimbabwe has gone through. The study by Chavhunduka & Bromley (2010) indicates how the land issue also contributed to the economic instability in the country. These studies collectively show that Zimbabwe has been in a state of economic instability since 2000, with some (Nkomazana & Tambudzai, 2009; Mzumara 2012) suggesting that the economic crisis was triggered in 1997 when the government decided to compensate the liberation war heroes using unbudgeted funds and Zimbabwe's participation in the war in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC).

Conceptual Framework

The study is based on the concepts of social capital and decentralisation. Social capital has been defined by many. For example, a popular definition by Halifan (1916:130) says social capital is:

... those tangible substances (that) count for most in the daily lives of a people, namely goodwill, fellowship, mutual sympathy and social intercourse, among a group of individuals and families who make up a social unit, the rural community whose logical center is the school.

Putnam (1993:167) defined social capital as "features of social organisation such as trust, norms and networks that can improve the efficiency of society by facilitating coordinated actions." Coleman (1988:598) defined social capital as being found in the structure of relations between actors and among actors. These various definitions show that social capital emanates from relationships. Secondary school is a field where relationships matter. There is a relationship between the teacher and pupils, parents and teachers, teachers and head of the school and the school and various other stakeholders. Thus, Bjornkov and Sonderskov (2012:1228) pointed out that "numerous conceptualizations have emerged from the original concepts." The definitions indicate that social capital is found in relationships between two or more people. Thus, Bjornkov and Sonderskov (2012:1225) declare that "human relations are important ... otherwise there would be no society to talk about." Another characteristic deduced from the definitions is that social capital has value or benefits for members who belong to a group. Most of the definitions show the elements which enable the running of schools. The elements which matter include trust, norms, reciprocity and obligations. The development of schools is based on social capital. Hence this study aims to use the concept of social capital to explain how economic instability affected students in decentralised secondary schools.

Decentralisation is the opposite of centralization. It has been defined in a variety of ways. For example, Aikara (2011:166) defines decentralisation "as a process of dispersing power so that the closer the power goes down to where a programme of action takes place, the more efficient would be the functioning of the programme." Chao (2012: 32) says "decentralisation is the transfer of power from central to local government." De Guzman (2007) refers to decentralisation as "the dispersal of power and authority from the centre to lower-level institution for greater access to government institution." Kemmerer (cited by Cuellar-Marchelli, 2001) defines decentralisation as "the transfer of decision-making authority, responsibility and tasks from the central to sub-national agency." From these definitions a number of characteristics of decentralisation emerge dispersal of power, transfer of power, transfer of decision making authority, responsibility and tasks, power goes down to where a programme of action takes place from central to local government and for greater access to government institution. In relation to education it can therefore be deduced that decentralisation is the transfer of power from the government to the school so that there is

more access and efficiency in the provision of education. The definitions seem to leave the idea of participation by the local community where the lower level is located. Thus Aikara (2011:169) adds that decentralisation also involves community participation which is “the involvement of people or local group in undertaking an educational process or educational institution...” and that power is shared between the community and the school.

There is extensive literature which shows the benefits of decentralisation in education (see for example Hope 2012; Lyon, 2013; Cuellar-Marchelli, 2001). Hope (2012, 90) cites a British Minister of Education as saying decentralisation in education frees leaders from bureaucracy, allows for innovation, excellence, inspiration for others, diversity and professional freedom. Lyon (2013:493) adds that decentralisation enables people to have control over their own affairs, to have a sense of security, to protect cultural identity, to participate in preferences and design and to achieve political realism. Cuellar-Marchelli (2001:146) also believes that decentralisation assists in redistribution of power, reduction of financial burden and in fostering greater efficiency in the use of resources. Decentralisation is a popular strategy for achieving greater responsiveness to citizens, improving decision making and improving service delivery (Parry, 1997: 211).

The two concepts of social capital and decentralisation relate to each other. Decentralisation enhances people to work closer to each other which assists in building social capital. Social capital helps participants to be closer together at local level which is a feature of decentralisation. The aim of the study is to analyse how students in decentralised secondary were affected by economic instability. This means the study analysed how economic instability affected students’ activities and their relations with other actors in secondary schools.

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

The economic instability in Zimbabwe between 2000 and 2017 was characterized by high inflation, high unemployment rates, poor agricultural produce, labour unrest, income shocks, unstable banking system, high corrupt activities, poor electricity supply, high levels of poverty and poor road network, inadequate provision of social services like education and health. For example, in 2008 the country experienced the highest inflation rate in the world of over of 500 million %. The unemployment rate was hovering over 80% as companies continued to close and relocate. The country was forced to import maize because of poor agricultural produce. The banking sector experienced a tumultuous period with some banks forced to close and long queues of clients was a common feature due to shortage of cash. Electricity supply was inadequate as shown by load shedding and the country relying on imported electricity. Poverty levels were very high with many people surviving on less than a dollar a day and not able to afford three meals a day. The health sector was characterized by shortage of medicines, inadequate health personnel and unmotivated workers as a result of poor remuneration. Schools continued to lose many qualified teachers. Many pupils dropped out of school as they could not afford to pay school fees. Many schools were not adequately resourced. Many roads in urban centres were full of pot holes and in rural areas some areas are now inaccessible because road maintenance is no longer being done regularly. Corruption was endemic and affecting every facet of life (Kairiza, 2012; Pswarayi & Reeler, 2012; Adebayo & Paterson, 2011).

For this study what was important was to find out how secondary school students were affected by economic instability as indicated by such variables as poverty, corruption, inadequate resources, loss of qualified teachers, failure to pay fees, transport and communication issues, load shedding of electricity, shortage of cash and inflation.

Economic instability has large-scale effects on society. Studies indicate that economic instability affects various activities. For example, Stovrupoulou and Jones (2013) found that girls and young women were

negatively affected by poverty, cuts in health and school problems at primary school level. In addition Long's (2013:1) study revealed that financial crisis negatively affected college enrolment. Furthermore Ali & Rahman (2015:307) show that economic instability has "a negative and significant impact on Gross Domestic Product" (GDP). Economic crisis "negatively affects human development and economic growth" (Kim & Conceicao, 2010:29-30). Education International (2010:2-4) found that in Africa economic crisis slows progress in education as it induced teacher shortage and less expenditure on education. Economic hard times can have severe consequences for families (Conger et al, 1992:526). The effects of economic instability are many and varied but this study is limited to how economic instability affected secondary school students.

Evans et al. (2009) noted that students without uniforms in Kenya felt stigmatized and were reprimanded by teachers. Their findings also revealed that putting on uniforms reduces absenteeism. Similarly Synott & Symes (1995) found that uniforms had a positive effect on students' behaviour. For example, Ruby (cited in Bunyawich et al, 2018) said that uniforms created passive characteristics and obedience to authority. For students food insecurity is a cause of concern as it causes much damage such as "lowering enrolment and attendance, limit capacity to concentrate and perform in school" (De Muro & Burchi, 2007:3). The studies revealed the importance of resources such as uniforms and food in the education of students. The results imply that if students do not have such resources their education is negatively affected. The study by Evans et al (2009) used a quantitative approach which collected data using questionnaires. The study was based on the concepts of cost of schooling and school attendance and was not specific to any theory. Then a study by De Muro & Burchi (2007) used the phenomenological approach which is an aspect of qualitative approach. They used interviews to collect data. Their study was guided by the theory of habitus but not specific to how economic instability affected secondary schools.

Further studies show that economic problems affected teachers' and students' attendance at schools. A study by Chene (2015) in Zimbabwe showed that there was a budget cut to education which resulted in shortages in schools that affected students' capacity to do school work. The author goes on to say there was a lot of absenteeism by teachers which also resulted in reduced schoolwork for students. Manguvo et al (2011) found out that there was a breakdown of discipline in Zimbabwean secondary schools, such as skipping lessons, drug abuse or vandalism due to economic problems that had a negative effect on school work.

A study carried out in Zimbabwe by Mufanechiya & Mufanechiya (2011:96) revealed that motivating students in secondary schools has become a "major challenge" for teachers and parents because of few employment opportunities. Motivation is an important element in the education of students and one of the factors which motivate them is future prospects of employment.

Studies also reveal that economic challenges have affected the way of life of people. For example, a study carried out in Zimbabwe by Chagonda (2012:11) revealed that teachers had become the "laughing stock of society" because of their low salaries. In addition, Chagonda (2010:4) found out that "hyperinflation led to an increase in poverty among the general populace." Such changes in the way people lived affected the education of students.

When people are in an economic crisis they find other means to survive (Wahlbeck & Awolin, 2009, Chagonda, 2012, Villiers et al., 2017, Filippa et al, 2013). This is also aptly pointed out by Beats and Willekens (2009:10) when they say that "...periods of economic crisis offer opportunities for innovation and productivity..." Students who were affected by economic instability responded in a variety of ways. Mawere (2012) found that some secondary school students dropped out of school due to reasons of economic instability. The Poverty Reduction and Economic Management Unit (2011) revealed that some parents transferred their children from urban to rural schools where costs were lower. Mawere (2012) revealed that some girls when confronted with economic problems which affected their school work resorted to early marriages. Erlwanger (2013:33) pointed out that "deviant acts became acute as teachers

who are supposed to curb and control such behaviour were so demotivated that they did not have time or energy to control or discipline students.” In addition, a study by Manguvo et al (2011:159) revealed that socio-economic collapse in the country influenced the development and the occurrence of student misbehaviour in public schools as teachers’ capacity to curb indiscipline was negatively affected by economic problems. It is therefore not surprising that some parents paid for “extra lessons” (Mawere, 2012:120) or enrolled them in “expensive independent colleges” (Tichagwa ,2012:40) as most secondary school environments had become less conducive to learning.

Statement of the Problem

For secondary schools to be effective there is need to have a stable economic situation (Smith and Vaux, 2003, Colletta and Cullen, 2000; Newton, 2004; Fukuyama, 1995). But since 2000 the Zimbabwean situation has been characterized by unstable economic conditions (Gwenhamo et al, 2012; Chavhunduka & Bromley, 2010; Moss & Patrick, 2006; Kangwanya, 2005) which have put social capital and activities in secondary schools in crisis. This prevented decentralised secondary schools from functioning as expected as norms were disrupted by economic. The economic instability in Zimbabwe has been characterised with unstable prices of goods, inflation, low salaries, high levels of unemployment, or cash shortages. These affected social institutions such as schools in a variety of ways. Hence the need to analyse how students in secondary schools were affected.

Aim of the Study

The aim of the study was analyse the effects of economic instability on secondary schools students in Zimbabwe between 2000 and 2017,

Objectives of the Study

1. To examine how learning activities of secondary school students were affected by economic instability.
2. To assess the psychological effects of economic instability on secondary school students.
3. To analyse the effects of economic instability on the provision of resources to secondary school students.
4. To examine how relations between secondary school students and other actors were affected by economic instability?
5. To analyse how secondary school students responded to economic instability?

Research Questions

1. How were learning activities of secondary school students affected by economic instability?
2. What were the psychological effects of economic instability on secondary school students?
3. How were the provision of resources for students affected by economic instability?
4. How were the relations between students and other school actors affected by economic instability?
5. How did secondary school students respond to economic instability?

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study is informed by the subjective ontology as it seeks to uncover the experiences of stakeholders in schools in order to discern how secondary school students were affected. In this study on the effects of economic instability, it is appropriate to find out the experiences of people, the realities constructed and the meanings attached to them. To this end this study made use of constructivism which then led to the

theoretical perspective of interpretivism.

The study was a qualitative study so it has to be “grounded in people’s experiences of that social reality” (Gray, 2009:22). In this research the concern was to find the human experience with the unit of analysis being individuals (ibid). Hence this study is best suited to use qualitative methods in order to have a deeper understanding of how relationships and school activities were affected by economic instability. For this study the features of qualitative study were fulfilled by visiting secondary schools to have contact with participants, interviews with various stakeholders in the schools so that I had a holistic overview of what happened, and verified themes that emerged with the participants.

The study used a multiple-case design in order to allow for replication of cases which raises the ‘level of confidence in the robustness of the method’ (Zainal 2007:2). Gray (2009:258) supports the use of multiple-case design as it helps in reaching “data saturation.” This study used multiple-case design in order to study more than one secondary school. Eight secondary schools from four districts were used.

The selection of cases was done using purposive sampling method. Purposive sampling helps to yield cases that are “information rich” (Patton in Palinkas et al, 2013:534). The province under study has nine administrative districts and the problem is which ones to select for cases of secondary schools to study. Four districts were selected based on their “accessibility” (Creswell, 2013:100) to the researcher. The sample of secondary schools consisted of urban and rural schools ensuring that the sample included government and non-government secondary schools. Particular schools for the study were selected using purposive sampling based on the types of a typical secondary school and on differences between the schools in Zimbabwe. A typical school in Zimbabwe is run by either SDC (non-government) or SDA (government), led by a Head, with a deputy Head, teachers and pupils and operating as either a day or boarding school. But with so many secondary schools in each district, the problem still remained as to which secondary schools to use as cases. Guetterman (2015:3) suggests selecting those cases that are adequate, appropriate and rich in the information which the researcher is looking for. The sites for the study were selected on the basis of discussions held by education officials who suggested possible schools which would provide the necessary data. From each of the four districts two secondary schools were selected as research sites. The actual number of secondary schools studied was eight. In district A, a government urban secondary school and a rural council school were selected. In district B, a rural council secondary school and a boarding mission secondary school were selected. In district C a rural urban council secondary school and a rural government secondary school were selected. In district D a rural government secondary school and a rural council secondary were selected.

The selection of the participants from the cases was done using active recruitment (Fleming et al, 2015:2) as the researcher identifies and contacts possible participants who have particular traits or interests in relation to the topic being studied. In recruiting teachers I looked for long serving members of staff, those who taught when politics and the economy were stable up to the period when instability started. The teacher participants also included those who started working during the period of instability. The teacher sample had seven male teachers and seven female teachers. The expected number of teachers from the eight secondary schools was sixteen (16) but at one of the rural council school no teacher was willing to be interviewed due to fear of possible reprisals by locals who they perceived to be hostile to teaching staff. In addition to the teachers at each school the head of the school or deputy also took part in the research. I interviewed seven heads of schools: two females and five males. There were supposed to be eight heads but at one of the secondary schools the head and deputy were absent on the day of visit.

From among pupils the selection was based on the information provided by the head of the school using the criteria of their ability to “articulate issues and being open minded” (Palinkas et al, 2015:534). The pupils were those in the upper classes, which is from Form 4 to Form 6. The number of pupil participants for each

secondary school needed to be enough to form a Focus Group as suggested by Giddens and Sutton (2013:48) who said one can have “between four and ten,” so for this study at each school the focus groups had eight participants made up of four male and four female pupils.

The study included parent participants. From each school a member of the SDC or SDA was selected, depending on their accessibility. Interviews were carried out with five parents instead of the expected eight because they were not all available when the study was carried out.

The study also included five key informants who were recruited by request. The key informants included two retired education officers and three teachers who were known to have been affected by instability. The key informants were interviewed.

In order to analyse data obtained in this qualitative case study, “theoretical propositions” (Yin in Gray, 2009:264) method were used. This means that data research questions and objectives guided how the analysis was done. A number of suggestions have been made by authors on how qualitative data may be analysed. Glaser and Strauss (cited in Suter 2006:330) suggest the constant comparative method which is characterized by “continuous process of category identification and clarification.” The second method is the one suggested by Yin (2011:177-178) which he conceptualizes as a Five-phased cycle. The third method is the one suggested by Marvasti (2004: 89) made up of three steps. The methods suggested by the three authors are similar and this researcher benefitted from borrowing from these suggestions. Drawing from these suggestions an effective analysis had the following: thorough reading and understanding of the fieldwork, coding of the work, came up with themes, relate the themes to questions and objectives of the study and made conclusions.

In data presentation the use of quotes has been suggested by many authors of qualitative research. Clark et al (cited in Suter 2006: 327) argue that for the story to be told clearly “the words and voices of the people involved” should be included in the report of the study. Anderson (2010:5) is of the opinion that “illustrative quotes”, a form of raw data, should be compiled and analysed. Anderson goes on to advise that when using quotes a range of respondents who have contributed should be shown and avoid using just a few. Anderson goes on to caution on overusing quotes without analyzing or discussing them. On the choice of quotes Noguero and McCluskey (2017:105) advised that quotes should be selected according to “their clarity and relevance” to the aim of the study. In qualitative research, like this study, the voices of the respondents were important as they indicated their thoughts and feelings. The quotes helped to enrich the presentation of the study.

This study used the idea of trustworthiness as depicted by dependability, credibility, transferability and conformability to ascertain the quality of the work. Morrow (2005:252) refers to credibility in research as “the idea of internal consistency” in which the important point is to ensure that proper research process is followed and that others are able to follow what has been done. Dependability deals with the way the study is carried out ensuring that there is “consistency in the methods used and analysis methods” (Gason cited in Morrow, 2005:252). Transferability is about the “extent to which the findings of a study can be applied to other situations” (Shenton, 2004:69). In order to achieve conformability, findings should represent the situation being researched on, as far as possible, rather than the “beliefs, theories or biases of the researcher” (Gason cited by Morrow, 2005:252). As noted the most important aspect of trustworthiness is ensuring that research methods used are done properly and consistently. This is what was done using the case study design, using triangulation of interviews, focus group discussions and documents and comparing results with the work of others authors.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The sub-themes which emerged from the findings were on learning, psychological effects, school uniforms,

food, social relationships and responses by students.

Learning

Learning is a core activity of any secondary school. Students' success at school depends on their ability to do work assigned to them by their teachers. An important obligation for students is to do school work assigned to them by their teachers. This study has revealed that school work was negatively affected by weak economic capital caused by economic instability as indicated by the experiences given below.

School work

The ability and opportunity of students to write work were affected by economic challenges. A head of rural secondary school (B) lamented: "Some students did not pay fees so did not come to school regularly. They failed to buy exercise books. As a result some did not write any work" (Head Interview 1/17). A student at a rural government secondary (H) added: "Many students could not afford to buy stationery like exercise books so did not do work assigned by teachers" (FGD 8/17). A female teacher at a rural council secondary school (B) was distraught, and almost in tears, as she narrated what happened in 2016:

Pupils were expected to buy their own stationery and this was problematic as those who could not afford to buy new exercise books did not write any work. For example last year I had 10 pupils who did not write any work because of this. This meant I did not realise the results of my effort (Teacher interview 3/17).

A parent at a rural government secondary school (H) testified what was happening in 2017: "I have five children and struggle to buy stationery for them. An exercise book just cost 25 cents but I sometimes fail to get it. Without exercise books my children do not write work" (Parent interview 2/17). Without the necessary stationery the students affected found it difficult to acquire skills and knowledge necessary for success at school. Bourdieu (1986) pointed out that objectified cultural capital in the form of books, pictures, dictionaries, instruments and machines are important for students to succeed in the school system. Economic instability made it difficult for students to have resources to use at schools.

Absenteeism

Student absenteeism and late coming were a result of weak economic capital of their parents. A student at a rural secondary school (B) said: "Some pupils did not come to school regularly because they were tired of walking long distances as they could not afford transport fares daily" (FGD 2/17). A student at a rural government secondary school (E) added: "For some students who came from afar it was difficult to walk to school as they did not have money for transport. This resulted in them arriving late at school so they missed some lessons" (FGD 5/17). A teacher at an urban secondary school (G) explained: "Students from surrounding farms rarely came to school daily because of financial difficulties" (Teacher interview 13/17). A head of a rural secondary school (D) noted what occurred between 2006 and 2008: "During the hyperinflation period many students did not come to school because they had no food. Lesson attendance was very low as they helped parents by either vending or panning gold" (Head interview 5/17). Failure by students to attend lessons on time or regularly meant that they would find it difficult to acquire the embodied cultural capital, like skills in language and communication, which were necessary for them to interact with their teachers. Or to use the words of Bourdieu cited in d'Almeida (2016:11) they would find it difficult "move in their world as a fish in water" because they missed opportunities to learn from their teachers due to absenteeism and late coming.

Teacher absenteeism also became common mainly due to cash shortages especially from 2016 onward. A student at an urban council secondary school (G) was worried: "Teachers were spending a lot of time queuing for cash in banks. This meant they missed some of their lessons so failed to cover all the work"

(FGD 7/17). The same sentiments were expressed by a student at a rural government secondary school (H): “Teachers were affected by cash shortage as they spent a lot of time queuing in banks to withdraw money. Sometimes they got nothing. A teacher did not teach between 4 to 6 days per month” (FGD 8/17). A teacher at a rural secondary school (D) acknowledged: “Due to shortage of cash, teachers spent a lot of time queuing for money. This meant we lost teaching and learning time. A teacher lost between five and six days trying to get cash” (Teacher interview 7/17). A head of an urban government secondary school (A) lamented: “I was always checking on teachers as they had developed a tendency to sneak out to try and get cash from banks” (Head interview 7/17). The presence of a teacher is important to facilitate learning which helps students to acquire cultural capital. This study has revealed that teachers were forced to be absent by cash shortage which meant that students were left alone with no one to guide them for many days a month. Teacher absenteeism negatively affected the acquisition of concepts by students. Teacher absenteeism disturbed continuity of learning which are crucial for developing confidence and self-image in individual students.

Objectified cultural capital, represented by resources such as textbooks, materials/equipment for practical subjects, was in short supply as a result of weak economic capital. For instance, a student at a rural government secondary school (H) noted: “We shared textbooks as they were not enough” (FGD 8/17). A head of rural secondary school (B) lamented: “It was difficult to teach without books and other resources. For example, 3 or 4 students shared one book when answering comprehension questions” (Head Interview 1/17).

Even a head of a boarding secondary school (C), which is supposed to be better equipped when compared to day schools complained about what was happening in 2017: “Lesson delivery was affected because we were failing to buy important resources especially for practical subjects” (Head Interview 2/17). A student of a rural secondary school (B) knew the figures of resources the school had for practical subjects: “Fashion and Fabrics did not have enough sewing machines- 7 machines for 55 pupils. For computers it was 6 for 63 pupils. For Building, less than 10 spirit levels for 54 pupils. Even for Agriculture there was no adequate water” (FGD2/17). The grasp of concepts became problematic for most students in secondary schools as there were very few resources to use. If students failed to grasp concepts they were not able to develop the necessary embodied cultural capital, for example competences in practical subjects like Fashion and Fabrics, to enable them to play the game in the field of education. But a retired education officer pointed out the improvement brought about by Government of National Unity between 2009 and 2013: “Schools received many books for both primary and secondary schools from UNICEF.” (Retired education officer 1/17) This was supported by head of a rural government secondary school (E): “We received many books during the GNU which improved the resources we had but with new curriculum some of the books are no longer relevant.” (Head interview 4/17).

Extra-curriculum activities

Extra-curriculum activities, like sports, are an important component of secondary school education. This study revealed that sporting activities were negatively affected by economic instability. A head of a rural secondary school (F) said: “Participation in sports was affected by lack of funds. We needed cash for transport but it was difficult to get” (Head interview 4/17). A student at a rural secondary (D) said: “Very few students were participating in sporting activities because the school could not afford sporting equipment required” (FGD 4/17). A parent at a rural government secondary school (H) noted: “Few students competed at district or provincial competitions because the school could not afford transporting many of them” (FGD 8/17). Students’ participation in sporting activities was negatively affected by weak economic capital of their parents. Failure by students to participate in sports resulted in them not being able to acquire the necessary skills in sport which enable them to develop embodied cultural capital. Bourdieu (1986:17) defines embodied cultural capital as “... long lasting dispositions of the mind and body.” These include skills, attitudes or perceptions a person acquires in the family or at school through socialisation. Examples

of embodied cultural capital are skills in playing sports a person acquires at school or attitude towards school work. Lack of embodied cultural capital among the students meant they failed to play the game in the field of the school as expected.

Seminars

Advanced level education in Zimbabwe is characterised by the students visiting fellow students in other schools to hold seminars as part and parcel of their learning. This requires transport and subsistence for the students. This has also been affected by economic instability as schools were finding it difficult to fund such educational trips. For example, a head of a rural secondary school (F) pointed out a problem for the post 2013 period: “Seminars for Advanced level students were affected as the school could not afford or access the cash to use” (Head Interview 4/17). A student at an urban secondary school (G) testified: “Recently our planned visit for a seminar was cancelled because the school failed to get cash from the bank to use” (FGD 7/17). This meant that students failed to acquire the skills as expected from the seminars where they were supposed to interact with other students of other institutions.

Weak results

The ultimate result of all these issues caused by economic instability was poor performance in examinations. For example, the head of a rural secondary school (B) was disheartened: “The pass rate is not pleasing at all. For example, at the peak of inflation in 2008 the school had the lowest pass rate. I was blamed as Head but there was nothing I could do as the resources were not enough for good work to be realized. This stressed me a lot” (Head Interview 1/17). This drop in results was also experienced by an urban secondary school (G) whose head simply said: “Pass rate at the school went down” (Head Interview 6/17). Performance in examinations was checked through examining pass rate documents analysed in schools. The lowest pass rate recorded for the eight schools was 3% at Ordinary Level. The only school which recorded a percentage pass rate which was more than 20% was a boarding missionary secondary school. But even this boarding school showed a decrease in the pass rate. The school used to record passes of over 80% but this had gone down to less than 70%. The other schools had pass rates below 20% at Ordinary level.

Findings from this study are like studies by others. For example, a study by Chene (2016:5) in Zimbabwe during the economic instability showed that there was a budget cut to education which resulted in shortages in schools which affected students’ capacity to do school work. The author goes on to say there was a lot of absenteeism by teachers which also resulted in reduced school work for students. Manguvo et al (2011:155) found that there was a “breakdown of discipline” in Zimbabwean secondary schools, such as skipping lessons, drug abuse or vandalism due to economic problems, that has a negative effect on schoolwork. In Western Europe some countries reduced budgets for education as a result of the economic crisis around 2008 (Koning, 2010). Similarly, Chene (2015:4) pointed out that economic problems experienced by schools in Zimbabwe has caused examination standards to go down. In Asia, Shafiq (2009:8) reveals that economic crisis results in educational outcomes going down. The ability of students to do work in the field of education is what enables them to acquire and assimilate embodied cultural capital which is necessary for them to “swim like fish in water.” (Bourdieu cited in d’Almeida 2016:11). Economic problems made it difficult for students to do their work, for example reading, solving mathematical problems or practical in science subjects hence they did not benefit from the dominant actors, teachers, in secondary schools. Secondary schools, as fields of education characterised as places of production (Swartz, 2016), had difficulties to fulfill their responsibilities of teaching and learning due to economic challenges.

Psychological Effects

Behaviour is a form of habitus (Pickel, 2005:6). This is derived from the idea that the habitus of a person is characterised by “patterns of thinking, feeling, wanting, doing and interacting” (ibid). These characteristics

constitute the behaviour of a person. Patterns of thinking relate to the psychology of a person. Secondary school students were psychologically affected by economic instability.

Economic instability in the country has disturbed students' focus on schoolwork. Extrinsic motivation, together with intrinsic motivation, play an important role in the education of students (Amabile cited in Akhtar et al, 2018:21). Mitchell (cited in Akhtar et al., 2017:21) defined motivation as "psychological processes that cause the arousal, direction and persistence of behaviour." Extrinsic motivation refers to the external forces which direct an individual to behave in a certain way while intrinsic motivation is about internal forces of an individual that drives an individual (Akhtar et al., 2018). Motivation forms part of human experience (ibid) so is linked directly to the dispositions of individuals. A person who is motivated is more committed to performing work than a person who is less motivated (ibid). This study, as revealed in the experiences below, indicates that the unstable economy of the country, specifically lack of employment opportunities which worsened from 2000, demotivated students in their learning endeavors.

A student at a boarding school (C) felt disillusioned: "There is reduced motivation for us to learn as most graduates were unemployed or were forced to look for work outside the country. It is boring as we have no prospects of a better future" (FGD, 3/17). Similarly, a student at a rural council secondary (D) was disheartened: "We have no hope of going to university because of financial problems" (FGD 4/17). A student at a rural government secondary school (E) was worried: "Lack of employment demotivates us. Why learn if future employment is not guaranteed? (FGD 5/17). And a student at a rural council secondary school (F) blamed corruption: "Corruption produces citizens who are lazy and used to get what they want easily through crooked means. For students it then produces cadres who are lazy as they sometimes get things easily" (FGD 6/17). Students revealed that prospects of future employment acted as an extrinsic motivator for them. But their narratives were a clear indication that lack of employment demotivated them to commit themselves to schoolwork. So, it means that their ability to acquire embodied cultural capital, like skills in various subjects, to enable to know how the school system works is reduced. Some students were likely to fail final examinations and so were unlikely to use the school system as a vehicle for social mobility. In this way the school perpetuated inequalities in society as students from disadvantaged backgrounds like those from rural areas were affected more and most unlikely to pass.

The same sentiments were expressed by teachers. A teacher at an urban secondary school (G) said: "Unemployment affected students as they had no prospects to be employed. They were demotivated" (Teacher Interview 10/17). Another teacher at boarding secondary (C) echoed the same sentiments: "Unemployment levels were so high that there was no motivation to learn for formal employment. There was no motivation to do better in class as former students roam the streets with no work" (Teacher Interview 4/17). A head of a rural government secondary school (E) also indicated: "Unemployment affected students' interest in education. They were no longer motivated to learn. Very few registered in 2008- 53/160 registered to write Ordinary Level Examinations" (Head interview 3/17). The institutional agents, teachers, who guide students to decode the cultural capital of the dominant class and to understand how the system works also, noted how students were demotivated. This means that teachers who were also demotivated were teaching students who had reduced interest to learn. Such a situation produced a negative environment not conducive to teaching and learning. The chances of students passing when demotivated were so reduced that some of the students did not even bother to sit for examinations.

The parents who provided the necessary resources for students also lamented the issue of demotivation. A dejected parent of a rural council secondary school (B) said: "Unemployment affected the community as school graduates were just loitering" (Parent Interview 1/17). Another parent at rural government secondary school (H) also expressed similar sentiments: "Unemployment is a big problem for the school as students were not motivated to learn. There were no prospects for future employment, and this dampened their spirit" (Parent Interview 2/17). If parents were aware of such demotivation among their children, they were likely

not to be motivated to pay tuition fees for them. This was worsened by economic instability.

The quotes above show that unemployment was a big problem which distracted students' focus from their schoolwork. So, there was no extrinsic motivation for them to work hard to pass or to focus on schoolwork which has less future tangible results. These results are similar to Wahlbeck & Awolin's (2009:3) assertion that economic crisis creates "feelings of helplessness among students which leads to a change of attitude towards school." A study carried out in Zimbabwe by Mufanechiya & Mufanechiya (2011:96) revealed that motivating students in secondary schools has become a "major challenge" for teachers and parents because of few employment opportunities. Motivation is an important factor in the learning process of a child (Ballantine, 1995) and so if this was negatively affected it suggests that students in secondary schools were affected. Sullivan (2002:149) argues that "a major component of the dominant habitus is a positive attitude towards education" which she deduces from Bourdieu's work in 1977 when he says "... the system of dispositions towards the school, understood as a propensity to consent to the investment in time, effort and money necessary to conserve and increase cultural capital." (Sullivan, 2002:149). So, if students were demotivated to learn it meant they no longer had a positive attitude towards spending time and effort on schoolwork. Students found it difficult to play the game in the field of education as expected due to lack of motivation.

School Uniforms

For students "to play the game" in the field of secondary schools, uniforms are required in Zimbabwe. The issue of uniforms is on-going debate which is not subject of this study. Be that as it may, Synott and Symes (cited in Adams, 2007:6) put a strong case for uniforms in schools by their argument that "uniforms governs and regulates both the outward and inward dispositions of the pupil." They add that uniforms assist to "foster school affiliation, loyalty and pride." (ibid, 7). In Zimbabwe school uniforms are universal for both primary and secondary schools. But economic instability has resulted in some students having difficulties in fulfilling this requirement.

A student at a rural government secondary school (E) was worried: "Some parents were not able to purchase uniforms as required so the dressing of their children at school was sometimes scruffy and made them to feel inferior when they compared themselves to others with better uniforms" (FGD 5/17). This was supported by a student at a boarding school (C) who bemoaned: "Uniforms of some students were worn out and had difficulties to replace them due to financial problems" (FGD 3/17). A teacher at a boarding secondary school (C) expressed similar sentiments: "Some students' uniforms were worn out" (Teacher interview 5/17). Furthermore a student at a government rural secondary school (H) pointed out: "Unemployment affected many pupils as their parents struggled to find money to buy uniforms" (FGD 8/17). A head of a boarding secondary school (C) gave an insight into a rule about school uniforms which was not adhered to: "Students were supposed to have three pairs of uniforms, but some had one and that compromised on cleanliness" (Head interview 2/17). A teacher at a rural government school (E) lamented the problem of uniforms: "Poverty was affecting cleanliness of the students as some put on the same clothes for the whole week. Some ended up dropping from school as they felt embarrassed" (Teacher interview 8/17).

The experiences of respondents indicate that economic instability affected some parents' capacity to provide uniforms for their children in secondary schools. Students who were affected felt out of place in the school system as uniforms are a school requirement. The results are similar to Evans et al (2009) research in which they found that students without uniforms in Kenya felt stigmatized and were reprimanded by teachers. Their findings also revealed that putting on uniforms reduces absenteeism. Similarly, Synott and Symes (1995) found that uniforms had a positive effect on students' behaviour in Australia. For example, Ruby (cited in Bunyawanich et al, 2018) said that uniforms created passive characteristics and obedience to authority. School attendance was affected which negatively impacted their ability to acquire the skills,

attitude and values which enhance their chances of getting educational qualifications, important as institutional cultural capital (Czerniewicz and Brown, 2014). In addition, wearing uniforms expected in schools helps to instill in students' feelings of cultural belonging and self-confidence (Lovett, 2013) so failure by some students to wear the required uniform made them to feel out of place.

Food

“Food and nutrition are basic human rights of human beings” (Mohajan, 2013:2). For students food insecurity is a cause of concern as it has negative consequences such as “it can lower enrolment and attendance, and then it can limit capacity to concentrate and perform in school” (De Muro & Burchi, 2007:3). In the long-term food insecurity is an “impediment to child mental development” (ibid). Zimbabwe has been characterised by food insecurity since 2000 due to a number of factors such as droughts, the land reform programme and scarce foreign currency (AfDB/OECD, 2003). The narratives below indicate that secondary school students were affected by shortages of food. A teacher at a boarding secondary school (C) described:

Our pupils here were affected differently with economic problems. Some were from poor background while others were from better off background. When we checked in their tucks which they brought we noticed the difference. Others brought virtually nothing while others had full tucks. This showed class differences and its humiliating for the students from poor background (Teacher interview 5/17).

A student at a rural day secondary school (B) noted: “For most pupils there was no proper lunch. They could not afford to buy or bring food from home for lunch. This affected their concentration during afternoon lessons” (FGD 2/17). Similarly, a student at a rural secondary school (D) was worried: “We had nothing much to take as food for our lunch. Usually, we have nothing, and this affected concentration during afternoon lessons” (FGD 4/17). A student at a boarding school (C) also acknowledged: “Our tuck of food, which we brought at the beginning of each term was reduced.” (FGD 3/17). A student at a government secondary school (H) said: “Most of us did not get any pocket money from our parents as they could not afford to do so” (FGD 8/17).

A student at a rural government secondary school (E) gave a detailed description:

Some pupils had no pocket money to buy jigs/goodies during break time or lunch. Although they had something to eat from home, they felt bad as they were unable to buy goodies like others. They felt inferior. A common saying at the school developed where students were either called nobles or have nots or peasants or the cursed. This leads to 'social conflict' among the students (FGD 5/17).

The experiences above indicate that some secondary school students were negatively affected by inadequate food provision which was caused by economic instability. Shortage of food affected students' participation in school activities and concentration on schoolwork. Other studies ((De Muro & Burchi, 2007; Chinyoka, 2014) reveal that hunger and inadequate food provisions have a negative impact on academic performance, health and survival of learners.

Social Relationships

Relationships are important in schools as they “assist in forging commitment to others” (Field cited in Allan & Catts, 2014:218). In addition, Allan & Catts (2014:218) argue that social capital “enhances community and social solidarity.” Schools are characterised by three types of social capital namely bonding, bridging and linking (ibid). Bonding social capital is found in relationships between people with similar characteristics such as that evident in families, school classes or ethnic groups. Bridging social capital occurs when different groups come together such as different families, different school classes or different

ethnic groups. Linking social capital refers to relationships between individuals who have different amounts or forms of power connect with each other such as teachers and students, teachers and parents. This study revealed that social relationships in secondary schools were affected by economic instability as revealed by the lived experiences of respondents: teachers and students, relations among students.

Teachers and students

Education can be defined as the “transfer of survival skills and advancement of culture from one generation to another” (Fakoya, 2009:5). The teacher plays an important role in transferring cultural capital to the students as they interact at school in general and in the classroom in particular. Hence the definition of teaching by Farrell and Oliveira (cited in Fakoya 2009:5) which emphasizes the importance of interaction between teachers and students, “the logical and strategic acts denoting interaction between the teacher and the students as they operate on some kind of subject matter.” This study has revealed that the relationships between teachers and students were negatively affected by economic instability as shown in the experiences below.

A teacher at a rural secondary school (D) said of the period between 2000 and 2009: “It was difficult to discipline students who had no respect for us” (Teacher Interview 6/17). A teacher at a boarding secondary school (D) lamented: “I stopped caring for students as I had nothing to eat in 2008 (Teacher Interview 5/17). A student at a rural secondary school (B) was disheartened: “Pupils were neglected by teachers as teachers complained that they received nothing for their work. Due to frustration, they would beat us for minor offences” (FGD 1/17). A student at rural government school (E) was also worried that: “The passion or zeal was no longer there for teachers as they were worried about bread-and-butter issues. Sometimes this caused them to easily get angry with students and punished them for minor offences” (FGD 5/17). A student at a rural government secondary school (H) observed: “Because of frustrations in not getting their money teachers were easily irritated and were usually too harsh with us” (FGD 8/17). A student at an urban secondary school (G) said: “Learners were usually afraid of their teachers which did not augur well for understanding of concepts” (FGD 7/17). And a teacher at an urban secondary school (G) admitted that: “Sometimes teachers beat students due to frustrations as they were mocked” (Teacher interview 10/17). A teacher at a boarding secondary school (C) was worried: “There was lot of indiscipline in schools as both the learner and teacher were demoralized by the economic situation” (Teacher Interview 4/17).

The results above seem to indicate that students’ relations with teachers were negatively affected by economic instability. These results confirm Botou et al’s. (2017:137) claim that economic crisis worsens “rivalry and conflict” as people interact with each other in families and workplaces. In Zimbabwe a study by Manguvo et al. (2011:159) revealed that socio-economic collapse in the country influenced the development and the occurrence of student misbehaviour in public schools as teachers’ capacity to curb indiscipline was negatively affected by economic problems. The transfer of cultural capital from teachers to students was disturbed by the economic problems experienced by teachers and students. This was because economic instability created an environment which was not conducive to positive interactions between teachers and students. As pointed out before, fields are characterised by struggle and oppositions even without economic instability. The results of this study indicate that economic instability worsened the struggle and opposition between teachers and students.

Students with other students

Carter et al. (2008:9) assert that “peer relationships play an important role in adolescent development and can contribute to a full and rewarding life.” They go on to point out that the youth learn norms, values and social behaviours which assist them to overcome challenges of adolescence and later, adult life. This is an indication that peers at school play an important role in the socialisation process through which students develop their habitus. MacArthur et al. (2017) use Bourdieu’s ideas in explaining how the actors in a

particular field have different amounts of capital which determines an actor's place in the field with actors trying to benefit from their resources. The capital which the actors may possess can be cultural, economic, social or symbolic. The relationships among students are therefore based on the capital they possess. This study has revealed that economic instability affected how students related to others in secondary schools as shown in citations below.

A teacher at a rural government school (E) noted: "Some students from rich background are looking down on other students" (Teacher Interview 8/17). A student at a rural secondary school (F) had observed: "Failure by parents to pay for their children's education is leading to discrimination among the students" (FGD 5/17). A student at a rural government secondary school (H) added: "Some students were given pocket money while others had nothing, and this made them to feel inferior" (FGD 8/17). A student at a rural government secondary school (E) lamented: "A common saying at the school had developed where students are either called nobles or have nots or peasants or the cursed. This leads to inferiority and superiority complex developing among students" (FGD 5/17).

A student at an urban secondary school (G) pointed out: "Some pupils were not able to purchase uniforms as required so their dressing was sometimes scruffy, and this made them to feel inferior when they compared themselves with others with better uniforms" (FG D 8/17). A teacher at a boarding secondary (C) also noted the issue: "Uniforms of some students were worn out" (Teacher interview 5/17). The teacher added: "Some students had tucks full of food provisions while other brought almost nothing." Although such inequalities are characteristic of capitalist societies such as Zimbabwe, these were exacerbated by economic crisis experienced in the country since 2000. Economic instability seems to have increased the gap between the rich and poor, which consequently affected students in schools.

The experiences of the participants revealed that economic instability negatively affected relationships among students. Economic instability appeared to have widened the gap between the rich and poor which had the "resultant effect of producing different levels of access to social capital" (Cemalcilar & Goksen 2014:97). Thus Lin (cited in Cemalcilar and Goksen, 2014:97) argues that there is a tendency for people to "associate with those similar to themselves." This has been shown in this study as some students seemed to have negative and discriminatory attitudes towards those with less economic capital. In addition to other variables such as political allegiance, religious and cultural affiliation and personality types, peer relationships were now based on social classes which were accentuated by economic problems experienced in the country.

Responses to Economic Instability

In an environment characterised by economic instability, the main secondary school actors, students, devised ways to survive. This is consistent with the characteristics of habitus as conceptualized by Bourdieu and other authors who refined his work. For Bourdieu (1990:53), habitus is "a system of durable, transposable dispositions, structured structures predisposed to function as structuring structures...." Houston (2002:157) expands on this, suggesting that habitus "acts as a very loose set of guidelines permitting us to strategize, adopt, improvise or innovate in response to situations as they arise." In addition, Barker (2016:4) asserts that habitus "responds to the discrepancies between the demands of new conditions of existence and customary habits through creative reinvention." From these descriptions of habitus it can be inferred that habitus though permanent or difficult to change, has capacity to transform in "moments of discomfort or insecurity" (McKinnon 2016:537). The moments of discomfort or insecurity in this case were economic instabilities.

When students enter secondary schools, they are expected to sit for their Ordinary Level examinations after four years unless affected by some adverse occurrence. But with economic instability it was no longer certain that some students would sit for Ordinary Level Examinations. The quotations below revealed that

secondary school students responded to economic instability in a variety of ways: dropping out of school; transferring to cheaper schools; early marriages; other deviant behaviour.

Dropping out of school

The rate of dropping out of school seems to have increased because of economic instability. A student at a rural day school believed that: “Some parents were not unable to pay for their children’s education which resulted in school dropouts.” (FGD 4/17). This was also noted by a teacher at a rural government school (E) who said: “Many parents were failing to pay fees for their children which caused many dropouts from school. For example, we started with 1000 at the beginning of the year (2017) but the number dropped to about 800” (Teacher Interview 9/17). A parent at a rural secondary school (D) added: “Many parents failed to support their children in secondary schools so many students stopped going to school” (Parent interview 5/17).

These experiences are similar to findings by Mawere (2012) in Zimbabwe who found that some secondary school students dropped out of school due to reasons of economic instability. In addition, Shafiq (2010) pointed out that economic crisis has a negative impact on school attendance as some children work to supplement family income which ultimately forced them to drop out of school.

Early marriages

In normal circumstances when boys and girls complete their Ordinary Level studies, marriage can only take place after the age of sixteen (16) or more years. In Zimbabwe the age for consent for girls is 16 and the age regarded as age of majority or age when they are regarded as adults is eighteen (18). Economic instability seems to have changed this for some students in Zimbabwe as they have resorted to early marriages as an alternative to going to school. Some students who dropped out of school, especially girls, end up getting married early.

A student at a rural government secondary school (E) was worried: “Failure to get funds for fees resulted in early marriages as girls had nothing to do at home” (FGD 5/17). A student at a rural secondary school (E) added: “The economic problems are also a factor for early marriages as some parents were failing to fund for secondary education. Getting married was a way of running away from poverty” (FGD 5/17). A teacher at a rural government secondary school (H) also said: “Poverty was fueling early marriages as a way of escaping the problems associated with economic problems” (Teacher Interview 8/17). Then a lady teacher at the same school gave a specific recent example: “Recently we had a case of a Form 2 who dropped from school due to pregnancy” (Teacher Interview 9/17).

The citations above revealed that economic instability exacerbated the problem of early marriages for students in secondary schools. This is similar to a study by Mawere (2012) which revealed that some girls when confronted with economic problems which affected their school work resorted to early marriages. Early marriages for girls mean an end to their education career as most of them may not have the chance to resume studies. The potential of such students is lost as a result of economic problems which forced them to marry early. The chances to gain cultural capital from secondary schools were lost because of weak economic capital that caused the student into early marriages.

Other deviant behaviour

Students are socialized to be obedient and respectful at family level and this is continued at the school level. A student who is deviant at school is regarded as being out of place and is normally punished to correct such behaviour. In normal circumstances most students in secondary school avoid deviant behaviour as this tends to distract them from their schoolwork. Deviant acts are a “result of interaction of different factors”

(Nabiswa et al. 2016:19). Results from this study seem to suggest that economic instability contributed to an increase in student deviant behaviour as revealed below.

A student at a boarding secondary school (C) revealed: “During the holidays some pupils were involved in vending activities to raise money for school. This exposed them to various forms of vices like abuse by men or drug usage” (FGD 3/17). A teacher at a rural secondary school (F) also noted: “Some of our students appeared to be using drugs as they associated with many former students.” (Teacher Interview 9/17). A student at a rural secondary school (F) noticed: “High crime rates as some former students were resorting to unethical means to survive” (FGD 6/17). At one of the boarding secondary schools (C) a student concurred: “Theft was also on the rise especially among the students” (FGD 3/17). The head of the same school (C) was disappointed with the development: “There were many cases of students stealing from each other because of economic problems. The school administration was spending a lot of time dealing with cases of theft as they stole from each other to see them through the term” (Head Interview 2/17). A student at another rural secondary school (D) testified: “Some girls dated sugar daddies to get money for basic needs. This led to spread of diseases” (FGD 4/17). A student at a government secondary (H) school noted: “Economic problems influenced some pupils to be involved in bad behaviour such as gambling for boys while girls went out with sugar daddies” (FGD 8/17).

The findings in this study are similar to other studies on students’ deviant behaviour. A study by Nabiswa et al (2016) in Kenya revealed that students’ deviant behaviour included taking drugs, alcohol abuse, love affairs with rich people and theft. During economic instability Erlwanger (2013:33) argues that such “deviant acts became acute” as teachers who were supposed to curb and control such behaviour were so demotivated that they had less time or energy to control or discipline students. Such deviant behaviour distracted students’ focus on schoolwork, so they were not able to benefit much from the school system which has a bias towards well-behaved students (Losen, 2011). Deviant behaviour has a negative effect on students’ ability to benefit from the cultural capital in secondary schools.

Transferring to cheaper schools

In normal circumstances students’ reasons for transferring schools are usually based on relocation of parents to other areas on permanent basis. But economic challenges seem to have added another dimension of the reasons for students’ transfer as revealed below in participants’ conversations.

A student at a boarding school (C) said: “Some students have been forced to transfer after their parents have been retrenched so fail to pay boarding fees. They then transferred to day schools which were cheaper” (FGD 3/17). A teacher at an urban secondary school (A) said: “Some of our students transferred to nearby rural schools which were cheaper than urban secondary schools” (Teacher interview 1/17). A head of a rural secondary school (B) noted: “The school received an influx of students from urban schools whose parents could no longer afford tuition fees charged at urban secondary school” (Head interview 1/17).

The quotations above indicated that some students transferred to other schools because of financial difficulties experienced by parents due to economic instability. The results echo findings made by Poverty Reduction and Economic Management Unit, (2011) which revealed that some parents transferred their children from urban to rural schools where costs were lower. Transferring from one school to another disturbs the flow of learning for students as coverage of syllabus and content differs from one school to another. Furthermore, students need time to adjust to the new school environment and a new set of teachers. In Zimbabwe, urban schools are generally better resourced than rural schools in terms of books, facilities and human power so transferring to such schools was painful as it meant a loss of better learning opportunities. Thus, such transfers induced by economic hardships disappointed students who were then demoralized, which negatively affected their learning and commitment to work.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The first theme revealed that learning by secondary school students was negatively affected by economic instability. Economic instability resulted in a number of challenges such as teacher and student absenteeism, late coming by students and inadequate materials for school activities which negatively affected the ability students to do work as expected in the field of education. Students were not able to benefit from teachers whose dominance as institutional agents had been battered by economic instability. The negative effects of economic instability on secondary school students' learning also implies that this negatively affects attainment of SDG goal number 4 which aims to achieve quality education.

The second theme indicated that economic instability had psychological effects on secondary school students which negatively affected learning. Students' motivation to learn was disturbed mainly because there were very limited prospects for employment as the country's unemployment rate was high. Sullivan (2002) argues that a major proponent of the dominant habitus is a positive attitude towards education. The results of this study seem to suggest that economic instability induced a negative attitude towards education due to stress and other psychological effects. This concurs with Bourdieu's argument that "... the system of dispositions towards the school, understood as a propensity to consent to the investment in time, effort and money necessary to conserve and increase cultural capital" (Sullivan, 2002:149). Due to economic stressful situations students found it difficult to find the right mental space to do well at school. Furthermore, psychological problems affected social capital at home and school, resulting in students failing to receive emotional support and encouragement from parents and teachers.

The third theme showed that the provision of resources for secondary school students was negatively affected by economic instability. The students faced shortages of resources necessary to do their work such a food, stationery or sporting equipment. This was a result of their parents being affected by economic instability. Secondary schools affected by economic instability made it difficult for some students to survive in the school system while those who were better off had no problems so continued to do well. In addition, students who had no adequate resources failed while those were better off passed which created inequalities.

The fourth theme is that economic instability negatively affected social relationships between students and other actors in secondary schools. Teachers' relations with students were mainly affected negatively by economic instability. Students felt that teachers neglected them due to economic challenges which seemed to make teachers irritated and harsh. Teachers felt students no longer respected them due to their bad economic situation. Such an environment in secondary schools led to increased indiscipline. Relations among students were also affected as economic instability appeared to have widened the gap between students from rich families and those from poor families. The relationships which were shown to have been strained due to economic instability exposed a feature of fields as spaces of opposition. Or to put it the words of Bourdieu (cited by Mangez and Hilgers, 2012) "actors are involved in a struggle for the definition of the legitimate symbolic structures". The results seem to suggest that economic instability worsened the relations which were already antagonistic in the field of education.

The fifth theme is that students in secondary schools responded to economic instability in a variety of ways. The responses were negative in terms of achieving the aims of education. Students responded to economic instability in different ways: dropping out of school, transferring to cheaper schools, early marriages, or involvement in deviant activities. Most of these were deviant acts which affected schoolwork negatively. The responses of actors in secondary schools are in line with Bourdieu's (1990:53) stance that habitus is "a system of durable, transposable dispositions, structured structures predisposed to function as structuring structures...." This is further explained by Houston (2002:157) who says that habitus "acts as a very loose set of guidelines permitting us to strategize, adopt, improvise or innovate in response to situations as they

arise.”

The findings of the study paint a bad scenario of the impact of economic instability on students in secondary schools in Mashonaland Central Province. The results suggest that the situation was allowed to deteriorate into a hopeless situation with very little assistance from the state that paid low salaries which were affected by hyperinflation. Economic instability has shown that progress made in education can easily be eroded in decentralised secondary schools as the state does almost nothing to alleviate the situation leaving the school actors to solve the problems. The advantages of decentralisation were overshadowed by economic instability making it difficult for students to learn.

The study revealed that learning in secondary schools was negatively affected by economic instability in the province studied. It is recommended that the government and the international community should assist schools to alleviate economic challenges which are experienced instead of leaving decentralised schools to find their own ways to overcome the problems. For example, students require special assistance so that they continue their work without too many disruptions due to the poor economy.

The results of the study indicated that secondary school students were psychologically affected by economic instability. It is recommended that counselling sessions be provided to reduce the negative effects on students. This may be done at school level by personnel specially trained to deal with stress related problems. This may enable students to cope with psychological problems experienced.

The study was carried out in one province, it will be important to find out if similar results may be obtained in other provinces.

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