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RE: THE OFFERING OF INCENTIVES TO TEACHERS IN GOVERNMENT AND NON-GOVERNMENT SCHOOLS TO REDUCE THE BRAIN DRAIN

1.0 PREAMBLE

Brain drain is a global phenomenon driven by new forms of transport, communication, business and the search for economic, educational and scientific opportunities. Under normal situations brain drain is actually brain circulation, a healthy situation, whereby accumulated skills, experiences as well as knowledge and technology are transferred through networks and contacts.

The phenomenon of brain drain in Zimbabwe, has now reached extreme proportions to the extent where the delivery of quality service is now under real threat. This is especially so in the education sector where the population is calling for something to be done to reduce this retrogressive move.

The Ministry has noted that school authorities have, thus, come up with special incentives for teachers to keep them in schools. Whilst this seems to have worked well in some schools, the introduction of this concept in most other schools has been met with mixed feelings. However noble the cause might be, a lot of complaints on the abuse of the practice are being received by the Ministry.

This circular, therefore, initiates a debate on the giving of incentives to teachers in government and non-government schools purportedly in order to retain them in schools.

2.0 THE LEGAL POSITION

It is common knowledge that some non-government schools that engage teachers who are civil servants have tended to 'top up' the salaries of those teachers. It is also common cause that some schools are now haphazardly levying parents and demanding other incentives in cash or kind to the extent that these additional incentives have resulted in additional financial demands on parents who, in the majority of cases, are not in agreement with such demands.

It is, however, salutary to note that the Education Act, as amended, provides for schools to form SDCs which are allowed to complement government efforts in the provision of education. The principles to be followed in charging parents and the use to which the levy may be put are specified in Statutory Instrument 87 of 1992 and Statutory 379 of 1998.

It is trite that the Act and the Statutory Instruments seem to be silent about the issue of such incentives. In fact these Statutory Instruments prohibit members of the established committees from paying themselves allowances from the collected levies.

3.0 THE ETHICAL POSITION

Whilst the Education Act does not specify the types of incentives that a school may offer to teachers, apart from salaries, it would apparently be unethical to ask parents to buy food for teachers who are on a salary.

Schools should therefore be discouraged from soliciting for donations in any form, including groceries for teachers. This may be left to individual parents to voluntarily donate gifts to teachers as they may wish. And, in any case, appropriate rules and regulations on acceptance of gifts have to be observed where these exchange hands.

4.0 CONCLUSION

The exodus of personnel to neighbouring countries is not confined to the public sector, let alone Ministry of Education, Sport and Culture. It is a national crosscutting issue experienced in all sectors of the economy. It requires a lasting solution. Meanwhile Government is determined to see Civil Servants' conditions of service, including payment of competitive salaries, improved.



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