

## Factors Influencing Trainee Teachers' Choice of Schools on Deployment after Completion of Training

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### Abstract

*Teachers have different conceptions on the different conditions that should be found in and around the schools in which they work, hence, preferences and choices made in selecting schools to work in. The study sought to examine factors influencing trainee teachers' choice of school on deployment after training. A mixed method research paradigm was employed and a case study design was utilised. A convenient sample of sixty-one trainee teachers in one teacher training college in Zimbabwe participated in the study. Data were collected through a semi structured questionnaire. Quantitative data were analysed statistically with aid of SPSS version 21 statistical software. Qualitative data were analysed through thematic content analysis. The study found that factors related to basic living conditions and teaching and learning constituted the most important factors influencing respondents' choice of schools. The study concludes that trainee teachers' views on factors influencing their choices of schools on deployment had serious implications on teacher deployment policies and practices. Recommendations were made.*

**Keywords:** Teacher deployment. Teacher attraction. Teacher Retention. Rural schools. Zimbabwe. Teacher training

### 1. Introduction

Teachers are generally trained to teach any type of children and to teach in different types of schools dependent on their levels and areas of specialisation. Primary school teachers are meant for primary school teaching and secondary or high school teachers are also prepared for such levels. However, teachers often have some choices to make on the type and location of schools in which they teach. Such preferences come about as a result of attractive and unattractive conditions that are found in different schools. Reed and Busby (1985) note the challenge with rural schools which may not attract qualified teachers because of unattractive conditions in which teachers operate. Teachers who find themselves working in such unattractive conditions may not stay in such school long enough to impact positively on the culture of teaching and learning.

On the issue of teacher deployment mostly in third world counties, Mulkeen and Chen (2008:ix) observe that;

*Teacher deployment policy and practice result in marked inequalities in teacher distribution, leaving small primary schools in remote locations less well served. ...teachers are frequently unwilling to locate in rural schools.*

The above observation alludes to the fact that qualified teachers have preferences of schools in which they would want to serve. Such preferences are often influenced by conditions that are found in the schools which make them favourable or unfavourable.

On the challenges of poor staff attraction and retention of rural schools, Reed and Busby (1985: 72) state that:

*In rural communities with limited recreational facilities, new teachers often complain about the loneliness and isolation they feel. With few social activities, new teachers can develop psychological symptoms of boredom and depression. They frequently cite social isolation as the reason they resign after a year or two.*

The above observation points to a serious problem that affects education in rural communities especially in instances where the rural environment is impoverished and has nothing to offer to attract the mostly young and urban trained teachers. Similarly, Lankford, Loeb and Wycoff (2002) cited in Berry, Rasberry and Williams (2013:1) also observe, in the American scenario, that "teachers who are better trained, more experienced, and licensed in the subjects they teach are more likely to be teaching in more affluent schools, serving more academically advantaged students." In concurrence with this view, Darling-Hammond and Post (2000) also note that it is the less qualified and untrained teachers who end up working in disadvantaged communities. This becomes a challenge to the attainment of quality education for all consistent with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights' call that 'everyone has a right to education'.

The importance of quality teachers is underscored by Darling-Hammond and Post (2000:133) who argue that:

*Expert teachers are a prerequisite for the successful implementation of challenging curriculum. Teachers who are well-prepared are better able to use teaching strategies that respond to students' needs and learning styles and that encourage higher-order learning.*

While preference for schools is an individual teacher decision, it results in marked differences in schools. Better managed and well-resourced schools end up staffed with the best teachers while disadvantaged schools will have poor quality teachers. This perpetuates inequality in society and the marginalisation of other sections of society. In showing the importance of quality teachers in promoting quality education, Tjihenuna (2014) argues that the quality of an education system is as good as the quality of its teachers. This buttresses the argument that all schools in a country should be staffed with properly trained and competent teachers. Yet there is a sad realisation that rural education and rural schools are associated with numerous deficiencies and challenges that negatively affect effective teaching and learning (Arnold, Newman, Gaddy & Dean, 2005; Pennefather, 2011).

### 1.1 School culture and teacher satisfaction

Teachers are also attracted to schools that have reputable teaching and learning school cultures. Tarusikirwa and Mafa (2013) observe that schools in Zimbabwe follow examination-centred curricula and schools are ranked according to overall performance in national examination. In such arrangement, top performing schools are publicised and made known to the general populace. Teachers would want to be associated with the top performing schools hence choosing to join them if given a choice. Trainee teachers in a teacher training college would not aspire to join an unknown school in the most remote parts of the country. However, all schools require properly trained and qualified teachers.

Best Practice Briefs (2004) point out on the importance of school climate in teaching and learning by stating that:

*School climate reflects the physical and psychological aspects of the school that are more susceptible to change and that provide the preconditions necessary for teaching and learning to take place.*

Schools with more positive school climates make it easy for teachers to function fully as professionals. Conversely, where school climate is negative, teachers' work is made very difficult and effective teaching and learning is impeded. In cases of schools with well-known negative school climates, teachers shun such schools.

An important aspect of school climate is safety. Teachers should feel safe to work in schools. There are instances where community interference in schools results in teachers being threatened and even assaulted at school. New teachers will not normally feel safe to join and work in such schools. Gonder and Hymes (1994) cited in Best Practice Briefs (2004: 2) define safety as:

*...an orderly environment in which the school family feels valued and able to pursue the school's mission free from concerns about disruptions and safety.*

Where there are disruptions in school operations, teachers and learners feel unsafe and effective teaching and learning is impeded. Warner (1997) advocates partnership between the school and the community instead of adversity. Communities and schools should work together to enhance learners' education.

On the school – community relationships, Hoy and Miskel (2001:252) maintain that "schools are open systems and depend on exchanges with environmental elements to survive. Multiple environmental influences come from different levels of society and affect what happens in schools." The school, in this regard, cannot exist without community and community depends on the school for the education of the young one. Hence there should be a symbiotic relationship between schools and communities. Anaxagorou (2007) contends that parents are important stakeholders in the school

and should be involved in some ways in the way schools operate. Such involvement, however, should be organised and meaningful for the enhancement of teaching and learning.

### *1.2 Parental support of school and learning and teacher satisfaction*

Barley and Beesley (2007) found that supportive relationships with families were strongly associated with the success of rural schools. Gallagher, Bagin and Moore (2005) also call for strong sound school- community relations. In addition, Darmody and Smyth (2009) contend that effective communication and collaboration with parents and community promotes better outcomes for students and in consequence better satisfaction for teachers.

Teachers like other employees expect job satisfaction from their workplace for them to exert themselves fully and produce desired outcomes, for instance good student achievement. The term job satisfaction refers to a combination of psychological and environmental circumstances that make a person feel satisfied with their job (Darmody & Smyth, 2009). Thus, teachers get satisfaction when parents support their efforts in schools. Shann (1998: 67) sums this up when she suggests that "job satisfaction is a multifaceted construct that is critical to teacher retention, teacher commitment and school effectiveness." Parental support helps to curb teacher dissatisfaction and burnout. Moore (2012) suggests that teachers who are dissatisfied negatively affect the morale of their students and fellow teachers and this may spill over to the families and community.

Parental involvement and support, according to Epstein (1995) in Davis (2000: 2) includes: parenting whereby families establish home environments to support children's learning; communications, which involve school-to-home- and home-to-school interaction ways meant to promote two way flow of information as well as volunteering in which parents work in school volunteer programmes for the development of the school and enhancement of teaching and learning. Parental involvement also involves learning at home as parents assist their children with homework and decision-making that involves parents to work in partnership with teachers, students and other community members in the school decision-making processes as well as collaborating with the community in which resources and services are harnessed to assist the school. This support Epstein (1995) advocates for would avert teachers' dissatisfaction and enhance their performance, as parents would be there to assist them achieve goals- of teaching children skills, knowledge, values and competencies.

A study conducted in the United States of America in 1997 on job satisfaction revealed that teachers in any school who received parental support were more satisfied than those who did not (Lumsden, 1998). On the other hand, research reveals that some teachers feel that parents who are involved in schools interfere too much in their (teachers') protected zone (Lumsden, 1998; Molnar, 1999). This is an unhealthy interpretation of parents' motives of participation in their children's schooling. Teachers may feel threatened by this 'interference' and thus removing the convivial partnering that should ideally exist between the two systems.

### *1.3 Working and living conditions of teachers in schools*

Teachers encounter a plethora of challenges with regarding living and working conditions that make new and young teachers to shun them. In terms of challenges encountered in rural schools, Nhambura (2011) quotes a teacher union leader in Zimbabwe who states that:

*The majority of the rural schools are inaccessible to a point that some teachers have to walk for 40 kilometres to the next serviceable road. This is true for areas in Mwenezi, Gokwe, Rushinga, Mudzi and Chiredzi. Some of the schools do not have electricity, clean water supply and health facilities nearby.*

The issue of reliable transport network through serviced roads becomes as important as basic needs such as clean water, electricity and health facilities. Adedeji and Olaniyan (2011) buttress this when they expose that rural teachers fail to access good health care facilities and leisure activities. Teachers would not, ordinarily, choose to work in such disadvantaged environments.

Studies on teachers' living conditions revealed that accommodation is a problem for teachers both in rural and urban areas. Deplorable housing is provided by rural schools and in towns many of the teachers live in rented accommodation with rentals gobbling a large chunk for their meager salaries (Sumra, 2005; Tao, 2012). This renders the teachers to become beggars. In one study cited in Sumra (2005), it was revealed that parents shun teacher visits to their homes albeit being professional, as they associate them with borrowing of money.

The situation is dire for teachers in other countries too. For example, studies have revealed that: teachers shun

teaching because of low salaries resulting in it gaining a low status in comparison with other professions. Teachers would therefore be "seen walking with students" resulting in loss of respect by students (Sumra, 2005) as they cannot afford other modes of transport.

Lack of teaching and learning resources and high teacher- student ratios often demoralize teachers. For example, in Mwanza Region of Tanzania the ratio is sometimes 1: 73 (Sumra, 2005). Teachers in this predicament would struggle to get teaching learning resources for the huge classes.

#### 1.4 Conditions that attract teachers to schools

There are several conditions that attract teachers to schools. Teaching and learning environments should be conducive to teaching and learning. In view of this, Lowe (2006:28) observes that:

*The most critical factor to be considered in teacher recruitment and retention is that schools must be effective and provide teaching and learning environments that are attractive.*

Schools should, therefore, be fully functional ones where the business of teaching and learning is given adequate and due attention in enabling environments. This will attract teachers to schools and assist in retaining them. Schools should not only attract teachers but also strive to retain them.

Making available adequate and good staff accommodation is also one effective way of attracting teachers to rural schools. Lowe (2006: 29) state that:

*A major reason for high teacher turnover in rural schools is the lack of suitable living quarters. Teachers who must drive long distances to work because of a lack of housing are more likely to leave their positions than teachers who live in or near the community where their school is located.*

Schools in rural areas should cater for the needs of teachers by making available good accommodation for teachers. Where accommodation is made available, teachers feel comfortable and safe. This will allow teachers to execute their duties well without worries of basic issues such as shelter.

#### 1.5 Teacher deployment and retention in the education sector

Teacher retention is primarily a product of target needs analysis by the administrative arm of the system. However, there is need for the harmonisation of the target needs analysis and the expectations of the teacher to be recruited and retained. There is a plethora of factors that can facilitate or militate against teacher retention (Barnett & Hirsch, 2005). The success or failure of teacher retention can in turn promote or compromise the quality of education. It is therefore imperative that schools, states and districts recruit, develop, and retain high-quality teachers to ensure that all learners are provided with quality education. Voke (2002:2) states that:

*States and districts, faced with a shortage, are currently scrambling to attract new teachers. Some have experimented with offering relocation benefits and signing bonuses, forgiving student loans, shortening or waiving pre-service training, recruiting and training education paraprofessionals, and attracting retired teachers back into the workforce.*

To foster quality education states, districts and schools should proffer means that will promote teacher retention. Such measures can include financial incentives like signing bonuses which can greatly increase the number of teachers that can be retained in a school per year (Atwell, 2006; Spradlin & Prendergast, 2006; Strunk & Robinson, 2006). In the Zimbabwean education system private schools or those that are referred to as trust schools usually retain high quality teachers as compared to public run schools. Examples of such affluent schools in Zimbabwe include Falcon College, Christian Brothers College, Dominican Convent High etc, whilst on the contrary schools in remote rural areas are hard hit by high teacher turnover. In South Africa, teachers in small private schools are in most instances dissatisfied with low salaries (Collins, 1999).

Teachers would prefer schools that are socio-culturally friendly to their background so as to destroy professional alienation. Teachers working in rural schools are discontented by social, geographic, cultural, and professional isolation compared to teachers in other contexts (Collins, 1999). This scenario has led to poor staffing in rural schools as compared to urban centres. Across national boundaries, stereotypes and xenophobia have also contributed to professional alienation and dissatisfaction. Most South African schools have suffered this predicament.

Whilst some teachers take up the teaching profession primarily for its intrinsic or psychological rewards, the opportunity to engage in meaningful work, the pleasure of working with children, and love of a particular subject area rather than extrinsic rewards such as salary or public respect (Lortie, 1975; Goodlad, 1984; Liu et al., 2000). The majority are motivated by external factors like financial rewards, friendly social environment and proximity to birth place. Donaldson (2005:1) also reveals that:

*....teachers' decisions to remain in their schools and in teaching are influenced by a combination of the intrinsic and extrinsic rewards that they receive in their work. Intrinsic rewards include such things as the pleasure of being with children, the exhilaration of contributing to students' learning, the enjoyment of teaching subject matter one loves, or the chance to develop new skills and exercise expanded influence on the job. Extrinsic rewards would include salary, benefits, and bonuses, public recognition for one's accomplishments, or being chosen to take on special responsibilities.*

Financial incentives coupled with other strategies such as teacher induction programs, mentorship programs, professional development, supportive leadership, and teacher collaboration opportunities during the school day are much more effective in retaining teachers in a school or in a district. Some have experimented with offering relocation benefits and signing bonuses, forgiving student loans, shortening or waiving pre-service training, recruiting and training education paraprofessionals, and attracting retired teachers back into the workforce (Johnson, 2000).

Teacher retention should therefore be a collaborative approach that considers both the needs of the school and expectations of the teacher. The bridging of this gap will translate to a win-win setup, hence promoting quality education.

### 1.6 School leadership and teacher performance

School leadership plays a vital role in the performance of teachers in a school. According to the Institute for Educational Leadership (2008) the role of the school leadership is to improve teaching and learning with the aim of increased student learning and achievement. York-Barr and Duke (2004) express that, school leadership has a responsibility to develop teaching and learning through individual development, collaboration or team development and organisational development. Schleicher (2012:14) states that:

*School leaders can define the school's educational goals, ensure that instructional practice is directed towards achieving those goals, observe and evaluate teachers towards achieving these goals, observe and evaluate teachers, suggest modifications to improve teaching practices, shape their professional development, help solve problems that may arise within the classroom or among teachers and liaise with the community and parents.*

It is the school leadership that ensures the organisational goals of a school are attained through their leadership skills. The school leadership also has a role to monitor teacher performances in a school and direct teachers towards proficiency.

Teachers desire to be deployed to a school that has a supportive and a safe environment. DeCesare, Wine and Augenblick (2008) reveal that teacher performance is enhanced in schools where the school leadership is able to tailor resources and staffing to fit the needs of the school. Jalloh and Schmalz (2002:3) state that,

*Several components of safe school planning refer to the most important type of resources for creating safe schools: human resources. Collaborative partnerships with law enforcement, mental health and human services professionals, parents and community members are vital to the success of a school violence prevention plan.*

School leadership should be in a position to supply resources for a safe teaching and learning environment for effective teacher performance and quality results. It is also very important for school leadership to be skilled in collaborating the school and the community for effectual teacher performance. The U.S Department of Education (2002:18) points out that,

*By bringing together community organisations with school districts, centres can take advantage of multiple resources in the community.-Collaboration can also ensure that the children attending a learning centre can benefit from the collective resources and expertise throughout the community.*

Teacher performance is boosted in instances where the school leadership allows collaboration between the school and the community. A school working in partnership with the community allows an opportunity for community members to volunteer their time and their expertise to help learners achieve the desired academic standards and also master new

skills.

Teachers would prefer to be deployed and perform efficiently in schools where the school leadership allows time for teacher development. DeCesare, Wine and Augenblick (2008) express that teachers would like to be deployed in schools where the school leadership allows planning time during the school day and a time where they would share ideas and work with colleagues. Jalloh and Schmalz (2002:4) states that, "Time constraints are routinely cited as a reason for the absence or shortage of staff development programs in schools or the failure of a promising program." It is imperative for school leadership to ensure teachers in a school attend staff development programs for teacher development and effective performance.

School leaders may also ensure effective teacher performance through the provision an enticement that motivates teachers to work towards attaining the maximum results. According to Schleicher (2012:14) school leaders are "...also in a position to provide incentives and motivate teachers to improve the quality of instruction." It is an aspiration of every teacher to be deployed at a school where there are incentives. Incentives entice teachers to perform effectively.

Schools that are in remote places have challenges in attracting teachers. Redding and Walberg (2012:4) observe that:

*... remoteness of a rural community is a barrier in attracting and retaining school leaders and teachers, the school's internal systems for ensuring consistent application of effective practice is paramount.*

In this view, student teachers often prefer to work in schools that are accessible hence teaching and learning in remote schools is negatively affected by lack of qualified personnel. In some instances teachers working in such schools will be so demotivated that they would not offer the best service to learners.

## 2. Research Objective

The study sought to establish factors influencing trainee teachers' choice of schools on deployment after completion of training.

## 3. Research Methodology

Myers (2009) observes that research methodology is a strategy of inquiry that involves research design and data collection. It is the purpose of this section for the researchers to describe and justify the research procedures involved in the study. The study utilised a combination of both quantitative and qualitative research approaches. Casebeer and Verhoef (1997) argue that quantitative and qualitative techniques can and should co-exist in a research process as they ensure a richer understanding of the phenomenon under study. Such is what Niglas (2000) considers methodological triangulation where multiple methods are used to study a single problem. The mixed methods was considered more appropriate as collecting both quantitative and qualitative data provided a better understanding of the research problem than making use of a single approach.

This study employed a case study research design. A research design according to McMillan and Schumacher (2010:102) refers to a "...plan for selecting subjects, research sites and data collection procedures." The research design also shows which individuals will be studied and when, where and under which circumstances they will be studied. The present study sought to ascertain what factors influence the deployment of teachers to schools after teacher training. The participants involved in the study were trainee teachers from one teacher training institution in Zimbabwe.

A convenient sample of sixty-one trainee teachers drawn from one teacher training college in Zimbabwe participated in the study. In tandem with the mixed method approach adopted for the study, questionnaires and questerviews were used to collected data for this study. Questerviews carry open ended questions that demand responses with explanations. They aim to elicit fuller responses encompassing stories, narratives and detailed experiences from participants (Adamson, Gooberman-Hill, Woolhead, & Donovan, 2004).

Quantitative data were analysed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 21. Data were presented in frequencies and percentages. For the qualitative aspect, verbatim accounts were presented to support the respondents' views. In this study there were two measures that were employed to ensure validity and reliability of the data collection instruments. The questionnaire was pilot tested to determine whether it was usable before administering it. Kazembe and Sithole (2010:65) also reveal that a pilot study is carried out to check on the manageability of the instruments before the study is began. The results obtained from the pilot test led to the development of the instrument. The comments sought from an expert in teacher training also assisted in coming up with a better questionnaire.



Henning, Van Rensburg and Smit (2010:73) state that the researcher will also have to consider obtaining a clear and fair, informed and voluntary agreement by respondents to participate in the study. A researcher has an obligation to respect the rights, needs, values and desires of the respondents as sensitive information is frequently revealed and the respondents' identity can easily be revealed. The purpose of the study was explained to the participants before they completed informed consent forms which stated explicitly that participations had a right to voluntarily participate and could withdraw from the study for any reason and at any stage of the research. The data collected was for academic purposes and would be kept confidentially with anonymity guaranteed.

#### 4. Results

The results section shows results on biographic details of respondents as well as results on respondents' responses on factors influencing their choice of schools. Qualitative comments are also given in line with the qualitative thrust of the study.

**Table 1:** Biographic variables

Biographic Variable	Description	Number	Percentage
Gender	Male	30	49.2
	Female	31	50.8
Age Range	16 – 18	0	0
	19 – 21	4	6.6
	22 and above	57	93.4
Year in College	First	11	18.0
	Second	18	29.5
	Third	32	52.5
Residence Status	Resident	9	14.8
	Non Resident	52	85.2

The above biographic details show that respondents had a fair gender distribution. The majority of the respondents were above 22, and it could be gleaned from this statistic that respondents were mature enough to make informed responses regarding choice of schools on deployment. Respondents also included students in varying years in college and the majority was non-resident students. The issue of being in or out of residence did not have any bearing on views on factors affecting school choice.

**Table 2:** Responses on factors influencing choice of school

Respondents were rating factors in terms of Very important (VI), Important (I), Unsure (U), Not Important (NI) and Not Important at all (NIA)

Factor/ degree of importance	VI 5		I 4		U 3		NI 2		NIA 1	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
The school should have reliable transport network	54	88.5	2	3.3	5	8.6	-	-	-	-
Water should be readily available	54	88.5	4	6.6	3	4.9	-	-	-	-
Parents should be supportive of teachers	48	78.7	8	13.1	4	6.6	1	1.6	-	-
Electricity should available in the school	48	78.7	9	14.8	4	6.6	-	-	-	-
There should be cellphone network coverage	48	78.7	9	15.8	4	6.5	-	-	-	-
School should have adequate learning materials	52	85.2	5	8.2	4	6.6	-	-	-	-
School should have a good pass rate	39	63.9	11	18.0	7	11.5	2	3.3	2	3.3
Teacher accommodation should be adequately available	52	85.2	3	4.9	5	8.2	1	1.6	-	-
The school should be close to my home area	19	31.1	14	23.0	10	16.4	5	8.2	13	21.3
The school should be in an area where people speak my first language	17	27.9	10	16.4	16	26.2	6	9.8	12	19.7
The school head should not be too strict	13	21.3	16	26.2	16	26.2	7	11.5	9	14.8
The school should have mostly teachers of my age	6	9.8	7	11.5	17	27.9	14	23.0	17	27.9
The school offers teachers some incentives	28	45.9	13	21.3	10	16.4	8	13.1	2	3.3

It has to be a school in an urban area	11	18.0	10	16.4	12	19.7	15	24.6	13	21.3
It has to be a school that belongs to my church	3	4.9	6	9.8	16	26.2	17	27.9	19	31.1
The school should have the subject I majored in - main subject	18	29.5	12	19.7	14	23.0	8	13.1	9	14.8
The school should not be in a remote area	10	16.4	12	19.7	13	21.3	13	21.3	13	21.3
The school should be a government school	4	6.6	10	16.4	12	19.7	13	21.3	22	36.1

The majority of the respondents, 91.8% indicated that their choice of a school upon deployment was influenced by the availability of a reliable road network. Other notable factors of importance influencing choice of school included availability of water (95.1%), supportive parents (91.8%), availability of electricity (93.5%), and availability of cell phone network coverage (94.5%), adequacy of learning materials in the school (93.4%) and availability of accommodation (90.1%). However, low responses showed that respondents did not consider the following as important factors influencing their choice of schools; whether the school was a government school (23%), the school being in a remote are (36.1%), whether the school belonged to one's church (14.7%) and whether the school had staff members of one's age group (21.3%). It was evident from the findings that choice of schools were influenced by factors related to basic requirements for a teacher to operate effectively in a school such as accommodation, electricity, water and reliable transport. Issues related to teaching and learning such as availability of learning materials and supportive parents were also identified as important factors.

#### 4.1 Qualitative Comments on Choice of School

Respondents were asked to add any other factors that influenced their choice of schools upon deployment and the following comments were made:

- Accommodation should be good if not best. (Respondent 22)*
- The school should have adequate classrooms and avoid sharing classrooms. (Respondent 3)*
- I would want to be deployed where the head has a democratic leadership style. (Respondent 18)*
- If it is a rural school, there should be transport to the school. (Respondent 5)*
- The school should have a library. (Respondent 11)*
- The school should have computer. (Respondent 53)*
- Teachers should be deployed where their spouses are to control HIV/AIDS transmissions. (Respondent 58)*

Comments made by the respondents further buttressed findings from the quantitative section of the study. Of importance is the realisation of how the issue of information communication technologies would also play a part in influencing one's choice of a school as the availability of computers in schools was also considered important. The issue of ensuring partners were in the same school as an important consideration for the deployment of teachers in the wake of the HIV/Aids scourge.

The researchers also ranked the factors in terms of importance by considering mean responses and Table 3 shows the factors.

**Table 3:** Ranked Important Factors Influencing Choice of School by mean responses

Rank	Factor	Mean
1	Water should be readily available	4.84
2	The school should have reliable transport network	4.80
3	School should have adequate learning materials	4.79
4	There should be cellphone network coverage	4.75
5	Teacher accommodation should be adequately available	4.74
6	Electricity should available in the school	4.72
7	Parents should be supportive of teachers	4.69
8	School should have a good pass rate	4.36

The issue of basic conditions necessary for survival in schools was established as contributing to important factors influencing choice of schools. Teachers would not be comfortable serving in schools where there are water, transport and accommodation problems, among others.



## 5. Discussion of Findings

It emerged from the study that the issue of a reliable transport network to school was one of the important factors influencing trainee teachers' choice of schools upon deployment. This finding corroborates findings by Nhambura (2011) that young teachers shunned rural schools in Zimbabwe because the majority of the rural schools were inaccessible and teachers could walk many kilometres on foot to and from schools. Such a scenario where teachers have challenges in travelling to and from schools owing to lack of transport negates effective development of rural schools in terms of quality teaching and learning as trained and qualified teachers would not work under such conditions.

The study also established that trainee teachers considered the availability of staff accommodation in schools as an important consideration influencing their choice of schools. This finding is consistent with earlier findings by Lowe (2006) who found that lack of staff accommodation in schools contributed to high staff turnover in rural schools. Schools without good and safe accommodation for teachers had serious challenges in attracting and retaining qualified teachers. High staff turnover in a school negatively affects teaching and learning as learners will always be exposed to new teachers and lack of continuity is a serious challenge in learning.

The study further established that the availability of electricity in schools was considered an important factor. Availability of electricity would make teachers' life comfortable as they would be able to use electric gadgets to make their lives easy. This finding corroborates Mulkeen and Chen's (2008: 104) observation that in Uganda districts found it difficult to deploy qualified teachers to rural schools because of 'lack of services such as electricity, water, health care and public transport.' Lack of basic living conditions make it unattractive for teachers to work in rural areas in Zimbabwe as it is in other sub-Saharan African countries.

It emerged from the study that the remoteness of a school was not considered an important factor influencing choice of a school on deployment. Such a finding stands in contrast to most findings in literature by Mulkeen and Chen (2008); Lowe (2006) and Voke (2002) which all show that teachers shun schools in remote areas. It may be possible that a school may find itself in a remote part of the country but with attractive conditions such as good road network, accommodation and water.

The study also established that trainee teachers were attracted to schools where there were supportive parents on teaching and learning. This finding is consistent with views by Epstein (1995) cited in Davis (2000) that there should be parental involvement and support in children's learning through provision of suitable learning environments at home as well as support and monitoring of children's work at home. In instances where parents work closely with teachers in supporting learning, teachers find their work easy and enjoyable.

## 6. Conclusions

The researchers conclude that most of factors influencing trainee teachers' choices of schools have close relationships on basic conditions of living as well as teaching and learning matters in schools. Teachers prefer schools where basic conditions are satisfied by provisioning of basic services. Once the basic conditions are met, other factors related to teaching and learning in schools would also be considered. Topical issues such as the influence if ICTs in communities and the existence of the HIV/AIDS pandemic also have strong influences on choice of schools. Factors influencing choice of schools have serious implications for teacher deployment policies and practices in Zimbabwe.

## 7. Recommendations

Against the findings of the study, the following recommendations are made:

- Government should take seriously the offering incentives to rural-based teachers by paying hardship or rural allowances in order to attract and retain teachers to rural schools
- Community, government and local authorities should work together to ensure the provision of adequate and good staff houses in schools.
- Rural electrification programmes should be planned in such a way that every school in the rural areas has electricity as this would go a long way in the attracting and retention of teachers to rural schools.
- School Development Communities should work closely with teachers in supporting teaching and learning in schools because it is only through strong teacher-parent partnerships that teaching and learning is enhanced in schools.
- Civic education should be an integral part of teacher education curriculum in order to inculcate the desire and

willingness to serve in teachers despite adverse conditions they may operate under in schools.

- Government teacher deployment policies should seek to promote equity in the deployment of trained and qualified teachers in all schools regardless the schools' location.

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