




Teachers' challenges encountered in the marketisation of education systems at primary schools in the Mbare-Hatfield district

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Abstract—Different forms of marketisation and privatisation have encircled the teaching profession. Internet sites that offer to produce academic work for a fee make academic work into a commodity that can be bought and sold. Most schools in Zimbabwe, the Southern African Development Community region, Africa, and beyond cannot easily afford internet services. This study explored the teachers' challenges in understanding the educational systems due to the marketisation of education. This study utilized the mixed methods approach and the case study design because of its strength in discovering more about unexplored problems. Two school head participants and forty teachers were selected from schools in the district. Semi-structured interviews and questionnaires were used to get data from the research participants. The results unearthed that the education system is one such tool for perpetuating class divisions and social inequality. Contemporary literature has provided evidence in the exploration of teachers' challenges encountered in the marketisation of education. To the extent that I have reviewed the literature, I found a substantial gap in knowledge about the impact of the challenges encountered in the marketisation of education. The study's objective was to determine the challenges teachers face in giving equal opportunities to poor and minority students due to the marketisation of education. There are some gaps caused by digital divides and government withdrawal from funding for public schools since the early 1990s when ESAP was embraced as an economic blueprint. The marketisation of education has negatively affected teacher integrity, sometimes leading to teacher misconduct. In recent years, the professional status of teachers seems to have been compromised. This is probably due to the changing nature of teacher professional work. Modern-day teaching practices are embroiled in an increasing struggle for private gain. Teachers must learn to cross social boundaries to make learning meaningful and relevant for all students.

Keywords: Teachers' challenges, Educational systems, marketisation of education

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I. INTRODUCTION

EDUCATION is one of the elements of the superstructure and an integral institution and cogwheel of social reproduction. School teachers in many countries face many challenges in understanding the educational systems due to the marketisation of education (Green, Rikowski & Raduntz, 2007). Consequently, widespread abuses in schools coming from teachers begin to take a toll, such as absenteeism, alcoholism, and abuse of learners which seems to be on a rampant increase due to the commercialisation of education (Ssekamwa, 2000; Bennell, 2004; Halsey & Vegas, 2009; Munene, 2009; Kasente, 2010; Musoke, 2011). However, it should be noted that these studies were carried out in East Africa. Therefore, it becomes imperative that other studies on the effects of the marketisation of education be carried out in Zimbabwe if we are to get a more localised analysis of the phenomena. Schools are related to their communities, and curriculum plays a key role in mediating this relationship (Apple, 2004).

Teachers' challenges faced the marketisation of education in schools

The crisis of education is a derivative affair. Education is an arena of class struggle. Rikowski (2018) noted the massive cuts to education

spending in the United Kingdom in the mid-1970s. Rikowski (2018) pinpointed some of the effects of these cuts on schools and colleges. The ripple effects of such measures include increased pupil-teacher ratios, abnormally larger classes, and reduced book grants. According to Whitfield (2006), marketisation is the process by which market forces are imposed in public services like schools, which have traditionally been planned, delivered, and financed by the local and central government.

Businesses are constantly asking themselves two fundamental questions: how much cheaper can they do things without losing customers, and how much can they charge without losing customers (Haile, 2008)? The rhetoric of marketization of education, however, as expected, stresses the participation of students. Students' views should be incorporated wherever possible. Students should play a major role in determining educational policy. They should be represented on all the central committees and decision-making bodies. The promotion by educational institutions and their courses is one aspect of the marketisation agenda. Another aspect is a change in some students' perceptions, as the development of the hand-out culture encourages students to collect hand-outs and log onto websites. Evans (2004) mentioned this danger had been characterised elsewhere as promoting a culture where students are frequently not expected to study but to learn. Furedi (2006) observed that this leads to a situation where

intellectual struggle and hard work are displaced by the assimilation of information and the acquisition of skills. Internet sites that offer to produce academic work for a fee literally make academic work into a commodity that can be bought and sold. Most schools in Zimbabwe, the Southern African Development Community region, Africa, and beyond cannot easily afford internet services. With students having bought the course through tuition fees, the marketization agenda thus impacts student satisfaction, closely related to whether student expectations are met, and where student satisfaction is often evaluated with an end-of-year or end-of-module student satisfaction questionnaire, often processed centrally and where the results are then distributed to appropriate staff (Palihawadana & Holmes 1999).

Many universities have adopted this mechanism. If the rhetoric of marketisation and marketing leads students, they see themselves as customers. They are likely to perceive any failure on the course as a failure, not of their ability to meet the reality of the demands of the course but of the institution, the teachers, or the course itself (Rotfeld, 1999, p. 416). This, at least, is one possible interpretation of the increase in complaints. Many students now see graduation as a job certification, not a mark of education (Rotfeld, 1999). Services are perishable. Production, distribution, and consumption coincide. Lessons and lectures, once missed, cannot realistically be replaced, even using access to notes from classmates. Video or podcast lectures can offer a new way of distributing master class content to classrooms globally (Jawadi, 2020). This type of service is only accessible to elite schools, which are very few in this country. It can be argued that Zimbabwean business-minded schools have been notorious recently for being myopic, considering short-term gains far more critical than long-term business prospects.

Unfortunately, this myopia is a business disease that has infected educational establishments. Regarding education, the rhetoric of choice and diversity may be compared with the reality of the closure of a course or department (Rikowski, 2018b). This may save money in the short term but will have serious long-term consequences. The institutions will acquire a reputation for not offering certain courses following decisions to close them down or deliberately ignore them in a particular academic year. The appropriate staff able to teach such courses will likely find appointments elsewhere. Resources will disappear, and the effect is likely to be that the costs of re-establishing the abandoned courses prove prohibitive. Knowledge, information, facts, and data no longer need to be encapsulated, dispensed, and acquired from an all-knowing authoritative source such as a textbook, an encyclopedia, or, yes, a teacher. The facts are everywhere and are widely available from various sources at the click of a mouse or tap on a screen. Most importantly, our students already know how to get it. Boni and Walker (2016) argued that the traditional classroom is, for many of them, an anachronistic model that is different from the world in which they live.

A noticeable knowledge gap exists. Learners are beginning to intuitively figure out how to retrieve the information they need, use it to solve everyday problems and communicate and collaborate about the same information with others. How they are asked to do things in school seems increasingly disconnected from their world. The challenges of providing a rigorous and relevant instructional program include teachers who have not been trained to teach in application modalities and our traditional mass delivery system. The changing curriculum couples this. What is relevant to one child is not appropriate to another. Many communities have clear signs that our schools are in dire straits (Bryant, 2014). At a time when the world is changing so rapidly, and globalization is opening so many new possibilities for the next generation, public schools are being forced to shrink the learning opportunities available to children. School funding cuts are being felt in the most critical areas. Schools are failing to transform program goals into action. As such, knowledge gaps exist in the process.

II. OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

This study determines the teachers' challenges faced at schools due

to the marketisation of education.

III. METHODS

Research approach and design

This study utilised the mixed methods approach because of its strength in discovering more about genuine and unexplored problems. Creswell and Creswell (2018) define the mixed methods approach as research problems inquiring into the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem. This approach was chosen because it allowed the researcher to utilise a set of non-statistical and statistical inquiry techniques and processes to gather data about social phenomena. The findings require an interpretive, naturalistic approach to discuss them (Adu & Okeke, 2022). This study explored the teachers' challenges faced in the marketisation, of education in schools.

Research design

Within the qualitative approach, this study adopted the case study design. Stake in McMillan and Schumacher (2014, p. 370) defined a case study as "an in-depth analysis of a single entity." This study opted for the case study as it involves a bounded period and a small sample size in only primary schools in the Mbare-Hatfield district. This design entails collecting data to produce an in-depth understanding of the entity being studied (Adu & Okeke, 2022). This study sought an in-depth understanding of teachers' challenges faced due to the marketisation, of education in schools.

Participants

Welman, Kruger, and Mitchell (2005) define a population as a complete set of cases from which the sample is taken. A population is referred to as a particular group of people of interest to the researcher (references needed). Eight hundred and eighty-nine teachers and approximately 32 400 learners constitute the population of victims of marketization and commodification of education at twenty-six primary schools in Mbare-Hatfield district. Ten school heads and forty teachers were selected, in concurrence with the argument that a case study selects a small geographical area of individuals as the study subjects (McMillan & Schumacher, 2014). This study used the non-probability sampling technique, which does not accommodate generalisation and purposive sampling for its appropriateness in identifying participants for data gathering.

Table 1 Sample Size

Sample characteristics	Research instrument used	Number of respondents
School heads	Interviews	2
Teachers	Questionnaires	40

Data collection instruments

Semi-structured interviews

The study used interviews to solicit information from parents on the challenges they faced due to the marketisation of education because they involve numerous crucial questions that make it easier to discover the parts that give meaning to the research. It also allows the interviewer to chase an impression of the interviewee or get them to explain a response more thoroughly. In addition, the responses given were immediately received, which means that semi-structured interviews have the advantage of ensuring a high response rate (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Interviews have flexibility in allowing for the expansion of valuable data to the participants, but it may not have been considered beforehand as relevant by the researcher (Gill, 2008). Therefore, semi-structured interviews allowed the researcher to add new aspects that may not have been included in the themes covered during the interviews. Semi-structured interviews enabled the researcher to discover what others feel and think about their way of life. Through what the researcher has heard and learned, he can extend his intellectual and emotional reach across time, class, race, sex, and geographical divisions (Plano Clark & Creswell, 2008). In addition to the above views, semi-structured interviews tend to be effective and flexible research tools that assist the researcher in understanding the problems teachers face due to the marketisation of education.

Questionnaire

Open-ended questionnaires

Chiromo (2019) defines a questionnaire as a collection of questions. Tuckman (2014) says that questionnaires are papers carrying structured questions to draw out certain information from the respondents to confirm variables under the study. Questionnaires given to respondents will allow them to give their own opinions. Therefore, a questionnaire is used to solicit information through a list of questions to be answered by subjects selected to participate in any research study. The researcher developed a questionnaire with close-ended and open-ended questions in this study. It was pre-tested to minimise the ambiguity of the questions. The questionnaires were hand-posted to all the participants.

Advantages of a Questionnaire

Researchers often use questionnaires as research instruments in descriptive research design. Borg and Gall (2019) suggest that one advantage is that researchers can find out what their subjects know about the problem being investigated. Best and Khan (2013) also point out that the questionnaire permits a wide coverage of the sample population at a minimum cost. Bryman (2021) also points out that a worded questionnaire with simple instructions like “put a tick” invites participation from the respondents with minimal challenges. MacMillan and Schumacher (2010) also posit that the other advantage of a questionnaire is that it can serve as a reliable record of the data collected. Bryman (2021) also says that another advantage of the questionnaire is the arrangement of questions likely to generate interest and allow subjects to air their views. Gray (2015) also points out that the other merit is that it gives the subjects adequate time for completion as one takes time to complete the questionnaire. The questionnaire is confidential, especially since the researcher will not meet to discuss with the subjects, and no names are written on the instrument. Borg and Gall (2019) concur that if it is well constructed, it can serve its full purpose, including de-briefing itself without the researcher. Thus, it is not biased or lessens bias as there is no influence from the researchers’ physical presence.

The questionnaires were disadvantageous to this study as they were limited and may not be fully completed (Borg & Gall, 2019). Best and Khan (2013) feel that some respondents may find some questions too involving or complex to answer, and some questionnaires may get lost and vital information will be lost that way. On the other hand, some subjects see them as bothersome and, as such, do not cooperate or provide honest responses. Improperly laid out or poorly worded questionnaires can lead the respondents to miss the questions.

Data collection procedure

Before going into the field to gather data, the researcher obtained permission from the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education to conduct this study. The researcher also explained the purpose of the research to the officials. The researcher made appointments with respondents in the sampled schools before conducting the interviews. The researcher interviewed ten school heads from the ten sampled schools. The participants were questioned at their schools because it was more convenient. The interviews were approximately 25 minutes long on average. The researcher recorded voice audio and took shorthand notes of the interview proceedings in his notebook. The interview schedule consisted of themes since the researcher used semi-structured interviews. In addition, the researcher allowed the respondents to talk about their experiences, taking note of facial expressions and signs. This allowed the researcher to pose follow-up questions to better the participant’s understanding of the problems faced by parents in schools. The researcher contacted the interviewees one week before interviewing them to determine if they would participate in the study. Arrangements were made to interview the participants after working hours, and the interview was conducted at the school. Permission was sought from the district education officials for the researcher to meet the participants on school property.

Data analysis

After data collection, the researcher analysed it and came up with

answers and explanations for the research problem. Data gathered through the semi-structured interviews and questionnaires was analysed and presented thematically and in a table. Interpretations were based on the analysed and presented data. Interpretation means relating one’s findings and results to existing theoretical frameworks or models and showing whether these are supported or falsified by the new interpretation.

Ethical considerations

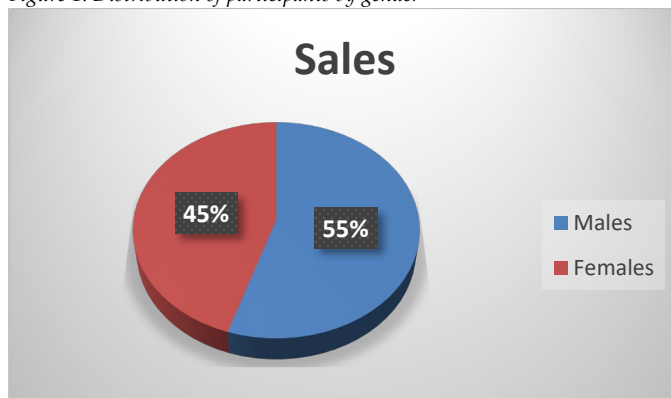
Ethics can be defined as “a set of moral principles and rules of conduct.” Ethics in research relate to “the application of a system of moral principles to prevent harming or wronging others, to promote the good, to be respectful and to be fair” (Sieber, 1993:14). According to Webster, Lewis and Brown (2014), it is vital that researchers respect the constitutional rights, privacy, dignity, and emotional state of their participants and the integrity of the organisation within which the research occurs, which is what the researcher in this study did. The researcher ensured that the participants had the necessary information to decide whether they would like to participate in the research, including what would be involved, anonymity, and confidentiality. Thus, the researcher was guided by these ethical considerations throughout this study in the Mbare-Hatfield district.

This study explained its purpose to the participants before the interviews. Unclear issues were clarified before the interview, and the participants were approved for participation in the study. The anonymity of the respondents was ensured as all the participants did not disclose their names to protect their identities. Confidentiality is essential to protect the participants against harm and to ensure their right to privacy. Guarantee of confidentiality, voluntary consent, the right to withdraw, and contact information were discussed before data collection commenced. The participants were informed that they could withdraw from the study at any point if they felt uneasy about their involvement.

IV. RESULTS

Respondents’ responses to academic

Figure 1: Distribution of participants by gender



This distribution is so because males are more open and available for research than females. Males and females have different perceptions regarding participation in research, sometimes bordering on aspects of trust.

Table 2 Distribution of teachers’ participation in research

Teacher Participants	Has participated in research before	Has never participated in research before
Male	18	4
Female	11	7
Total	29	11

This study purposively selected the teachers based on those who have participated in research before and those who have not participated before. Some male and female teacher participants indicated they had participated, and some had never participated in

research studies. The distribution reveals that 73% had been involved in research, which guaranteed cooperation from most participants and an objective response.

After data collection, this study analysed data and provided answers and explanations for the research problem. Data gathered through questionnaires and interviews was analysed and presented in tables and figures. The study revealed that all participants among the teachers (100%) lamented that more resources should be pooled and that money should be set aside to expand requisite infrastructure in schools so that they develop in line with global trends. In the short to long term, digital divides should be a thing of the past in schools in Mbare-Hatfield district. Eighteen participants (45%) revealed a serious lack of capacity-building programmes for teachers to address the gaps caused by digital divides as well as government withdrawal of funding of public schools since the early 1990s when the Economic Structural Adjustment Programme (ESAP) was embraced as an economic blueprint.

The commercialization of education has negatively affected teacher integrity, sometimes leading to teacher misconduct. In recent years, the professional status of teachers seems to have been compromised. This is probably due to the changing nature of professional work. In a thesis titled "Secularisation of post-independence education and its significance for moral education in Uganda", Munakukaama (2015) attributes teachers' declining status and professional standards to the secularisation and commercialisation of education. He perceives modern-day teaching practice as embroiled in an increasing struggle for private gain, non-observance of punctuality, lack of integrity, irresponsible use of school resources, and looseness in social relations.

Consequently, widespread abuses such as absenteeism, alcoholism, and abuse of learners seem to be on a rampant increase due to the commercialisation of education (Sekamwa, 2000; Bennell, 2004; Halsey & Vegas, 2009; Munune, 2009; Kasente, 2010; Musoke, 2011). However, it should be noted that these studies were carried out in East Africa. Therefore, it becomes imperative that other studies on the effects of the marketisation of education be carried out in Zimbabwe. Most participants suggested that schools initiate self-sustenance projects like poultry, vegetable farming, rabbit keeping, and operating tuck shops. Others pinned their hopes on maintaining relationships with the donor community, such as the United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund. The Basic Education Assistance Module is another programme that aims to assist underprivileged students by paying their fees and levies.

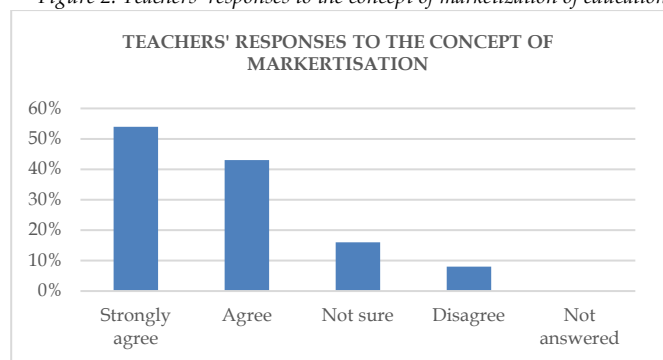
The challenge for Zimbabwe is redressing the educational qualitative and quantitative imbalances in the inherited system and meeting the exceedingly large demands with limited resources (Shizha & Kariwo, 2011, p. 27). Schools in Mbare Hatfield district also face capacity challenges, including double session schooling, or "hot seating," and overcrowded classrooms. Hot seating means that half of the students attend school in the morning and the second half in the afternoon. These methods enable more students to attend school, but quality declines because students are given less attention and time to learn. These findings from the teachers can be argued to confirm findings by studies by Abate (2001) in Addis Ababa that more resources should be allocated to include learners from poor backgrounds. In addition, these findings are consistent with findings in inclusive schools in the United States of America and Canada to a greater extent (Villa et al., 1996). The Coalition Educational Policy of the United Kingdom (2010) suggests that teachers should be given independence and freedom from head teachers, teachers, and staff to develop teaching strategies and styles best suited to their students. Competition between schools drives up standards. Successful schools will expand, and failing schools will go to the wall. Becker in Haralambos and Holborn (2013) observed that teachers are inclined to give favours, encouragement, and support to learners closer to the ideal pupil's standards. Those perceived as being furthest from the ideal pupil standards are given low-value work, discouraging and derogatory comments, and are not free to associate with the teacher. O'Hara (2014) concludes that the obtaining situation disproportionately

affects the most vulnerable people in society while leaving the well-off unscathed.

Some uncouth teachers fight for students with relatively stable financial backgrounds during class allocations. In most schools studied the contentious issue of extra lessons was discovered to go unabated. Such schemes of things remain of dubious value if they are of little value to the learners. There is a growing disproportionate inequality trend in how lessons are delivered for the mainstream class and how learners who pay for extra lessons are taught. Those learners whose parents cannot afford to pay for the extra lessons are sometimes even victimised to coerce them to barge into the teacher's selfish interests. It was also discovered that more valuable learning materials are given to those learners whose parents can afford to pay an extra fee to the teacher. In addition, where there are furniture and material shortages, the learner furthest from the ideal pupil will be the last to be considered.

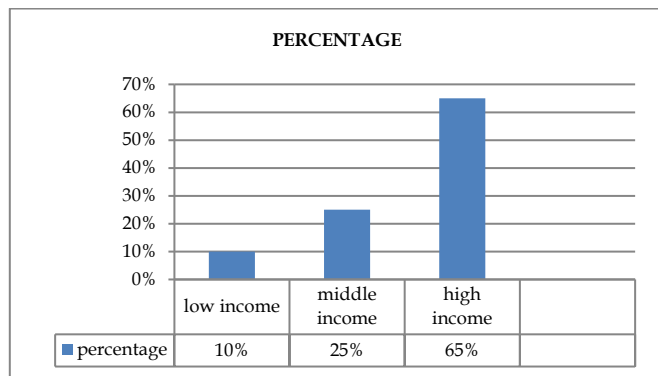
It was also discovered that this extends to allocating duties and selecting prefects and other prestigious positions of responsibility at school. Ultimately, this leads to the self-fulfilling prophecy. Such learners are spared from punishment even where they deserve punishment. Favours are evidently skewed and heavily inclined towards the teachers' sacred cows. Some respondents indicated that teachers even went to the extent of allocating dubious marks to their cash cows to please the parents. The way teachers prepare and devote time for extra lessons was seen to be different from what they do for their mainstream classes. One of the teachers had this to say, "*Mudhara kana wagwinha mhene yako wotoita zvekuti mhene ifare, ukasadaro unofa nezvara. Government yenyu iyi haidi kutipa mari inotenga.*"

Figure 2: Teachers' responses to the concept of marketization of education



The graph above shows that more than 50% of the teachers agreed that the marketisation of education was not bad, although it comes with its fair share of problems. As such, parents would be given a false picture of their children's performance depending on their income level and their relationship with the school, particularly the class teacher. Those parents in the habit of complaining against teachers would be in for a fix. Parents who are against the teacher's illegal initiatives risk having their children sacrificed. Minority groups are side-lined. Their needs and interests are trampled upon. They are treated as being anti-school culture and maladjusted. Most in-class learning activities are performed and dominated by the seemingly affluent. Learners from well-up families donate learning materials to the school, such as balls. Hence, when it is time to use those things at school, teachers cannot exclude the children of the donors, even if they are not at all good in that area. This kills the self-esteem and zeal of learners from working-class backgrounds. Education becomes like any other commodity that can be bought and sold. Teachers should adapt to student challenges. Each child faces a different life after leaving the classroom; each goes home to a different family with different backgrounds. High expectations should be set for all students, but different solutions should be in place for those children who need extra help meeting their goals. A teacher's job is not always easy, but it is always worth the time and effort (Hougan, 2009).

Figure 3 Showing the Skewed Allocation of learning resources to learners.



The above graph shows the skewed way teachers allocate scarce resources to their students based on socioeconomic background. Learners from affluent backgrounds were getting more learning resources like textbooks, good chairs and desks, access to working computers, and other privileged resources. Learners from low-income families were the least considered when it came to the allocation of resources. Learners from poor backgrounds were not given the first preference to operate computers during Information Communication Technologies (ICT) lessons since some voluntarily stepped aside to let those who knew how to operate a computer do it on their behalf. Learners from middle-income backgrounds got privileges slightly above those given to learners from low-income families.

Qualitative findings

Two school heads were interviewed on the challenges encountered by primary school teachers due to the marketisation of education

School Head

The head said, "In general, teachers aim to perform well, but the circumstances require them to make choices and may not always align with their desire for fair compensation and their understanding of what constitutes quality education. The marketisation of education divides private and public-school teachers. Primary school teachers in low-income areas face many challenges, have diverse needs, and influence education to become more market oriented."

School head 2

The second school head pointed out, "Even though the idea of marketising education in primary schools has been praised for enhancing educational equality and performance, much evidence indicates that it could result in the opposite outcome. The effects of marketisation policies on disparities in educational results is a matter of concern requiring serious discussions. The commercialization of education contributes to the widening of educational disparities. Marketization leads to higher levels of socioeconomic segregation and stratification in schools, connected to disparities in educational achievement."

The above point of view has also been raised by Lubienski et al. (2022). The marketisation of education also led to school social segregation (Perry et al., 2022). This is related to school inequalities in human and material resources, which are then associated with inequalities of educational outcomes for students from socially advantaged and disadvantaged backgrounds. The marketising policies may indirectly negatively affect academic outcomes via school segregation.

V. DISCUSSION

Different forms of marketisation and privatisation have encircled the teaching profession. This has been done to such an extent that it now makes the position of teachers highly vulnerable. One key finding from the teachers was that schools should be state-financed but not state-controlled. Teachers and representatives from the local community should control educational processes. Competition and contestability among public schools' breeds avarice, and schools, through teachers, employ chicanery means to achieve success. Teachers have a very

significant lifelong impact on all their learners. The fundamental question was whether education should operate on market principles and who should own and control schools. The idea that education is another market commodity has become pervasive in different discourses (Jawadi, 2020). Curriculum design, like teacher's identity, is a field strongly influenced by marketisation trends and requires some adaptations that may not be acceptable and satisfactory for many working in the field. This study discussed the trend of marketisation of education and its relationship with teacher's identity and curriculum. As Gül, Gül, Kayab, and Alicanb (2010) state, one of the challenges of the present day is equal access to education, which can be improved by distance education, e-learning, and other web-based information-sharing methods.

VI. RECOMMENDATIONS

After a careful analysis, the study makes the following recommendations: schools should adequately capacitate their teaching staff in every manner possible; teachers should treat all their learners equally despite the learners' different social class backgrounds; teachers should maintain a moderate degree of professionalism despite whatever working conditions they may be subjected to; school leaders need autonomy to distribute resources best to support their community of learners - pupils and teachers; teachers must learn to cross social boundaries to make learning meaningful and relevant for all students; availing of more learning resources in support of the underprivileged learners; closing the gap created by digital divides and ensuring equality and access of educational opportunity.

VII. CONCLUSION

Teachers face challenges such as a lack of adequate learning resources as they sometimes deliver lessons that involve abstract concepts. Schools should provide teachers and learners with the necessary educational materials or support as they navigate the highly contested education system and terrain. Teachers should try to understand their learners' needs. Learners from different social class backgrounds have different educational needs ranging from physiological to psychological needs. Teachers should try to create equality of learning and educational needs for all learners.

VIII. CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

The author has no conflict of interest related to this publication.

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