

Employee reward as distributive justice: the case of primary school teachers in Uganda

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Introduction

The centre piece of the current study was to analyse employee reward as distributive justice with particular reference to primary school teachers in Uganda.

The study is premised on the fact that for quite some time government has made changes in teachers' reward and implemented salary increments on several occasions.

However, teachers clamoured for a fair reward so much that on a number of occasions they have had to resort to industrial action.

Concept of employee reward

The concept of employee reward covers the whole spectrum of “how people are rewarded in accordance with their value to an organisation.

It is about both financial and non-financial rewards and embraces the strategies, policies, structures and processes used to develop and maintain reward systems” (CIPD, 2014).

The implication here is that employee reward is much broad than merely paying employee their wages. It involves strategies, policies, structures and processes.

Reward

	Country	Approx No. of teachers	Monthly pay in Local currency	Monthly pay in US dollars
1	Kenya	146,205	Ksh 26,499	\$302
2	Rwanda	40,299	Frw 98,000	\$142
3	Tanzania	175,449	Tsh 196,500	\$119
4	Uganda	129,651	UGX 250,000	\$95
5	Burundi	36,557	BIF 65,058	\$42

Changes in teachers' reward system

- a. The reward for teachers in Uganda has been always revised upwards during salary increments for civil servants.
- b. It was assumed that the reward system creates a work environment that is congenial to employees.
- c. In spite of the above intention, primary school teachers in Uganda have not been happy with the reward system.
- d. This is because the increments have been outpaced by the cost of living.
- e. The Uganda Public Service pay reform strategy adopted in 2002 and approved by Cabinet in 2006, rationalised the public service pay into a single spine structure. The aim was to remove inequality in wages for similar graded jobs
- f. Extra fees school were banned with the introduction of Universal Primary Education in 1997.
- g. All these were interpreted as unfairness or injustice.

Progressive employee reward system

- ✓ Initially the progressive employee reward system was intended to encourage primary school teachers to embark on staff development programmes.
- ✓ Teachers at Grade I were expected to upgrade to Grade II, and thereafter upgrade to Grade III.
- ✓ The pay for teachers with Grade III were paid a higher wage compared to those with lower grades of I and II.
- ✓ This progressive salary scale system had nothing to do with neither responsibility nor performance.
- ✓ Rather it is qualification, seniority, and promotion to headteachership or deputy headteachership which influence the teachers' salary scale.

Justification of the study

In spite of the progressive reward system and annual increments primary schools teachers felt there was injustice in the pay . For that reason under the leadership of the Uganda National Teachers Union (UNATU) teachers throughout the country embarked on strikes:

- ✓ In March, 2010,
- ✓ In June 2010
- ✓ In 2011
- ✓ In July and August,
- ✓ In 2012,
- ✓ In September 2013,
- ✓ The Secretary General of UNATU contended that the Uganda primary school teachers were the worst paid in East Africa because the average pay was UGX250,000 or US\$97.16 per month.
- ✓ In 2014 teachers complained about delayed payment

Some teachers have been taking long without accessing the payroll, yet they work fulltime. This implies that they work and do not earn.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- 1) To assess the relationship between employee reward and leadership in primary schools
- 2) To analyse the effect of primary leadership on distributive justice
- 3) To assess the effect of employee reward on distributive justice for teachers

Null and Alternate Hypotheses

$H1_o$ There is no significant relationship between employee reward and leadership of UNATU

$H1_A$ There is a significant relationship between employee reward and leadership of UNATU

$H2_o$ Leadership of teachers union has no significant effect on distributive justice

$H2_A$ Leadership of teachers union has a significant effect on distributive justice

$H3_o$ Employee reward has no significant effect on distributive justice

$H3_A$ Employee reward has no significant effect on distributive justice

Unit of analysis

- ✓ The population of interest consisted of primary schools teachers in Wakiso and Kampala districts. The teachers in the Uganda's government primary schools are were the unit of analysis for the current study.
- ✓ The total number of respondents was 246. The sample of was considered sufficient following the rule of the thumb which states that in social science research any sample between 30 and 500 is sufficient to produce credible results (Roscoe, 1975).

Data collection methods

- A cross sectional research design requires one to use several data collection methods. In that regard the following methods were used:
- *Questionnaire*: A questionnaire was designed according to the objectives and variables. The questionnaire as a tool was preferred because it is an appropriate instrument for any survey research. The respondents provided answers in a pre-determined order. The instrument had sections labelled A, B, C, and D. The sections are:

Sections of the questionnaire

	Section of questionnaire	Items
A	Personal variables	6
B	Reward	9
C	Leadership	9
D	Distributive justice	9
	Total	33

Likert type scale	
Strongly Disagree	1
Disagree	2
Neutral	3
Agree	4
Strongly Agree	5

Findings

- ✓ Primary school teachers like all other civil servants received annual salary increments
- ✓ Teachers were of strike since 2009 because they were unjustly remunerated (i.e. little pay which in some cases came late).
- ✓ The progressive pay system with its attendant Qualification – seniority – responsibility motif, did not satisfy the primary school teachers.
- ✓ Before UPE parents paid motivation fees to support teachers. This was banned in 1997.

Allowances removed

The allowances that teachers missed included:

- 1 Headship of a school allowance
- 2 Deputy headship of a school allowance
- 3 Class teacher
- 4 Housing
- 5 Transport
- 6 Subject teacher
- 7 Co-curricula related allowance
- 8 Performance related allowance

All the above were removed and head teachers stopped from levying any fees.

Case of distributive injustice

- ✓ Teachers contended that the salaries they get are far do not enable them to meet basic human needs especially when they have to pay taxes as well.
- ✓ Teachers argued that there was injustice because they were poorly remunerated civil servants and yet they worked full time.
- ✓ Some teachers being left out of the pay roll for months and years was a case of injustice.
- ✓ In their petitions, teachers included that statement of injustice whenever it came to paying them salaries.
- ✓ Teachers could be promised pay rise but government would fail to honour the promise.

Employee reward related strikes and UNATU leadership

- ✓ Since 2009 primary school teachers have always been staging industrial strikes over they saw to be an “unjust” reward system.
- ✓ Teachers throughout the country were able to strike in 2009, 2010, 2011, 2012, 2013 and 2014 because of the leadership role of UNATU.
- ✓ The result of the test of hypothesis 1 revealed that there was a positive significant relationship between the two variables ($r(246) = .290, p < 0.01$)
- ✓ A simple linear regression test gave an Adj. R^2 of 8%. That meant that reward related strikes were possible because of UNATU leadership

UNATU leadership and distributive justice

The second hypothesis of this study was on UNATU leadership and distributive justice. The test of the hypothesis showed that (a) there was a positive significant relationship between the two variables hence $r(246) = .464, p < 0.01$. The regression test gave an Adj. R^2 of .212 which translated into 21%. The implication is that UNATU leadership enabled teachers to realise the issues of distributive justice and to struggle for it. This is evidenced by the fact that most of strikes and the confrontation with government were led by UNATU leadership

Reward and distributive justice

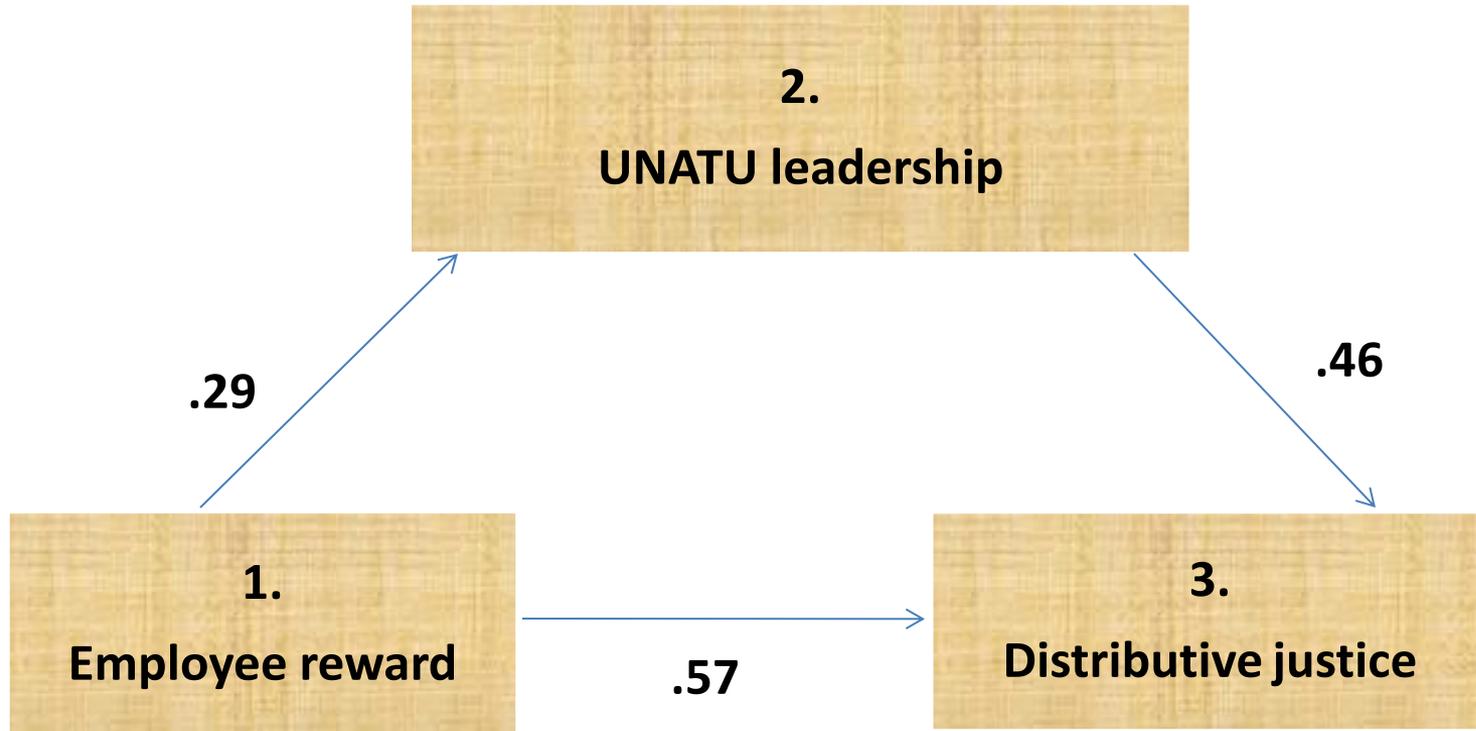
- ✓ The reward for most primary school teachers is generally low. Even the highly paid teacher in 2014 receives the average was around UGX489,988 per month by 2014. This figure is far below the cost of living per month estimated at UGX834,740 per month.
- ✓ Teachers are required to work 9 hours each day and 45 hours each week. The above pay without housing, meals, transport, medical, and other responsibility allowances, made teachers feel some distributive injustice that needed to be corrected, hence their agitation for distributive justice.

Reward and distributive justice cont'd

The third hypothesis was on employee reward and distributive justice. When tested, it was noticed that there was a positive significant relationship between the two variables $r(246) = .574, p < 0.01$. Furthermore the results of the regression test indicated that 33% of distributive justice could be gauged from the pay primary school teachers receive.

Hypothetical model

Paths for the hypothesised empirical model



Paths coefficients

Paths	Variables	Coefficients
P21	Employee reward and leadership	.29
P32	Leadership and distributive justice	.46
P31	Employee reward and distributive justice	.57

Variable 1 (employee reward was the only exogenous variable
Variable 2 (leadership) and variable 3 (distributive justice) were the
endogenous variables.

So, reward x leadership = endogenous value

$$.29 \times .46 = .1334 = .13 \text{ (total indirect effect of reward on distributive justice)}$$

The indirect effect is added to the direct effect of .57.

$.13 + .57 = .70$ (the total causal effect of reward on distributive justice. The 70% is not good enough as evidenced by teachers industrial actions. More needs to be done.

Recommendation

Since financial rewards are not able to bring about the required justice for teachers, it is proposed that non-financial rewards be given to teachers. These may include:

- a) Housing
- b) Meals at school
- c) Education for biological children
- d) Career development
- e) Non-financial recognition
- f) Welfare benefits

Simulation of the proposed cause of action

Step 1 The total causal effect is subtracted from 100%.
That is $100 - 70 = 30\%$.

Step 2 Product in step 1 is multiplied by direct effect.
That is $.30 \times .57 = .17$

Step 3 The product of step 2 is added to the total causal effect to derive the total causal effect after simulation. That is $.17 + .70 = .87$ or 87%.

Based on simulation it is viable to adopt the non-financial reward model because it promises to add a value of 17% to the employee reward. Distributive justice is seen in a more broad perspective.

END

Thank you very much forgiving me this opportunity to share my thoughts on the practical aspects of distributive justice vis-à-vis employee reward.