

# **TEACHER PROFESSIONALISM IN PUNJAB: RAISING TEACHERS' VOICES**

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## **Glossary of Abbreviations**

ACR	Annual Confidential Report
AEO	Assistant Education Officer
B.A.	Bachelor of Arts
B.Ed.	Bachelor of Education
BPS	Basic Pay Scale
B.Sc.	Bachelor of Science
CCB	Citizen Community Board
CT	Certificate of Teaching
CPD	Continuous Professional Development
DCO	District Coordinating Officer
DEO	District Education Officer
EDO-Edu	Executive District Officers-Education
ET	Elementary Teacher
FA	Faculty of Arts (high school grade 12 qualification)
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
GCET	Government Colleges of Elementary Teaching
LC	Learning Coordinator
M.A.	Master of Arts

M.Ed.	Master of Education
M.Sc.	Master of Science
PESRP	Punjab Education Sector Reform Programme
PTC	Primary Teaching Certificate
Rs.	Rupees
SAHE	Society for the Advancement of Education
SMC	School Management Committee

## Executive Summary

When assessing recent reforms in the education sector, the voices of teachers in Punjab should be central to debates about education policy. The reality, however, is that teachers' needs and perceptions are too often neglected from the policy process and this can result in policy failure. This study has combined site observations with teachers' perceptions to provide a rich account of teachers' realities, drawing particular attention to their experiences of recent education reforms.

School infrastructure in Punjabi schools leaves much to be desired. The number of classrooms is far from adequate and when they do exist, they are often stuffy and poorly maintained. Inside the classroom, there are chronic shortages of teaching supplies (such as textbooks and science kits) as well as teachers. In fact the school environment is so unattractive that it is not difficult to imagine why schools are neither a conducive learning environment for students, nor attractive work places for teachers. In spite of the considerable challenges, it was remarkable to see teachers showing signs of commitment. There were several examples of teachers making personal and collective contributions towards the maintenance of schools.

Teachers are not afraid of school inspectors. On the contrary, they want more interaction with the district administration. They also want to see more than a token effort from School Management Committees and Nazems in school matters. Teachers seek the cooperation and interest of parents and the community at large. Teachers recognise that a good head teacher can play a critical role in motivating, leading and managing teachers. Thus at many levels, the role of teachers as educators can be enhanced if support structures function properly.

In addition to providing an enabling environment for teachers to do their job properly, policymakers need to pay closer attention to teacher management policy. Teachers would favour a more meritocratic system in which good performance is rewarded with promotions and bonuses and poor performance is sanctioned. Teachers want to receive continuous professional development through opportunities for training. At present, the system in place for monitoring teacher performance (Annual Confidential Reports) is inconsistent and confusing. The incentive structure for teachers is undermined by the patronage networks which often determine who gets promoted and who goes for training. Teachers are further demoralised because salaries are frequently disbursed late.

The recruitment of teachers on fixed term, school-specific contracts is a key component of recent education reform. Although it is early days to make any conclusive statements, teachers expressed concerns about various aspects of fixed term contracts: transportation difficulties if teachers are recruited from outside the immediate school vicinity and delays filling posts in insecure and remote areas. In addition, the introduction of different terms and conditions for new recruits has provoked outcries amongst existing teachers, who complain that despite additional recruitment, their workloads have increased. This is because the limited job security of new recruits means they have a disincentive to work

hard and as a result, they are frequently absent as they hunt for alternative employment. The recruitment of specialised English teachers has also been contentious because they are seen by other teachers as having a lighter workload whilst attracting a higher salary.

Teacher professionalism rests on four crucial inputs. Teachers need to be valued as integral stakeholders in the education sector. This means teachers need to be regarded as equal partners in education planning. Teachers also need to be respected as professionals, who are valued as important members of the community. Education policy needs to respond to the fact that teachers need to be enabled to do their job properly, which means making the school environment a conducive learning environment as well as an attractive place of work. Finally, teachers benefit enormously when they are supported, and led, in their endeavours by head teachers, parents, the SMC and the district administration.

## 1. Introduction

Education in Pakistan is at a critical juncture. With the introduction of the Education Sector Reforms 2001-2004 and the policy of devolution, there is great potential for increased access, enhanced equity and improved quality of education. However, in order to achieve the ambitious aims expressed in these policies, it is essential that teachers are supported to engage positively with the process of education reform, and incentivised to perform well in the classroom. Teachers are the central actors in education, playing a pivotal role in creating positive learning experiences and achievements that will encourage children and their parents to value education and make the considerable sacrifices sometimes implied by sending children to school.

The Government of Punjab clearly appreciates the need to ensure an adequate supply of professional teachers. During recent education sector reforms, it introduced initiatives to train greater numbers of teachers, reform teacher education and utilise flexible methods of recruitment such as short-term contracts. However, there remains an urgent need to better understand the experiences of teachers in situ. Teacher performance remains a concern to many education stakeholders, who draw attention to evidence of teacher absenteeism and pupil drop-out<sup>1</sup>. Yet little is known about teachers' own attitudes to their profession: what support they need from managers and supervisors; what their professional development needs are; how they are responding to the new realities of devolution - greater involvement of parents, communities and devolved authorities. This research aims to provide valuable insights into the reality of life as a teacher in three disadvantaged districts of Punjab, and makes recommendations for action that the research team believes will enhance the experience, motivation and performance of teachers.

The purpose of this research is to strengthen teacher management policy in the Government of Punjab by producing an analysis of teacher performance, conduct, motivation and incentives, particularly in light of recent education sector reforms. The key research objective was to analyse factors which influence teachers' performance in government schools by addressing the following issues:

- characteristics of teacher performance and conduct;
- incentives and disincentives affecting teacher performance;
- management structures which exist for appraising, supporting, rewarding and sanctioning teachers at the school and district levels.

What is unique about the methodology that was used to examine these issues was the emphasis on teachers' voice, a voice which is so often excluded in the education policy making process. Exclusion from the policy process undermines policy 'buy in'. According to teachers, they have neither participated nor were they consulted during the recent education sector reforms. This has left them apprehensive of recent education

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<sup>1</sup> Ministry of Education, 2002, National Education Policy; Punjab Education Department Report, 2002; SDPI working paper 39, 1999, Universal Basic Education in Pakistan: a commentary on strategy and result of a survey

sector reforms<sup>2</sup>. For example, if rural teachers had participated in the education policy processes, they might have emphasised the particular difficulties faced by teachers in remote and insecure areas and pushed for incentives for teachers who agree to take up such posts. However, policy is not a simple linear process with a beginning (policy recommendation), middle (policy choice) and end (policy outcome). It is an iterative process and it is not too late to revise and adapt education policy to reflect the realities and perspectives of teachers. The voices of teachers expressed in this research matter because it is they who implement the new policy and they who are most acutely aware of the daily challenges faced by students and teachers alike.

## **2. Research methodology and sample size**

The centrality of teacher voice to this study has shaped the choice of research methodology. In order to investigate teachers' own perceptions of factors affecting their performance, qualitative techniques such as interviewing (structured and semi-structured), focus group discussions and observation of teaching practices were employed. Interviews were also conducted with district education officers and head teachers in order to get a more balanced perspective on teacher performance. A copy of all the interview schedules, the form for recording classroom observation and the FGD and the methodological limitations can be found in the annexes.

The three districts of Mianwali, Rajanpur and Hafizabad were chosen on the basis of their low levels of literacy and other indicators of poor socio-economic development.<sup>3</sup> In each district, the research team visited 6 schools, an equal number of boys' and girls' schools and a mix of stand-alone primary schools and primary sections within high schools as well as urban and rural schools<sup>4</sup>. This gave a total sample size of 18 schools<sup>5</sup> and provided material for an in-depth, gendered and highly contextual study. This contrasts to the quantitative focus of the World Bank study on teacher management in Punjab concurrently being undertaken.

## **3. Organisation of research findings**

A combination of site observations and teachers' perceptions revealed that schools vary tremendously in terms of physical conditions and support structures available to teachers from the level of school, community and district education offices. Both of these factors have a strong bearing on teacher performance. Moreover, male and female teachers are affected in different ways, making it important to perform a gendered analysis. In addition, the research findings disaggregate teachers' perceptions by type and location of

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<sup>2</sup> This finding is based on perceptions of teachers interviewed for this study rather than a systematic review of who actually took part in technical working groups etc.

<sup>3</sup> Further details on sampling methods can be found in section 2 of the appendices.

<sup>4</sup> The urban-rural distinction is somewhat blurred because these districts are not highly urbanised. Mianwali town for example stretches along a few main roads and schools located within a ten minute drive of the district education office located in the centre of Mianwali were found to be fairly rural.

<sup>5</sup> The research team avoided visiting single teacher schools because it would have been a significant disruption for students. However, it can be assumed that some of the challenges faced by teachers which are reported in the research findings would have been more pronounced at single teacher schools.



schools. Three analytical themes are used as a means of organising the data collected: teachers as educators, teachers as employees and teachers as people.

The box below illustrates the differences between two schools within the district of Rajanpur.

### **Box 1: Comparing two schools in Rajanpur District**

#### **Government Primary School for Girls, Kot Behram, Rohjan, Rajanpur District**

This is a rural, stand-alone primary school located amidst cotton fields belonging to politically influential feudal landlords. There are only two classrooms for the 233 students enrolled at this school, half of whom are in the Kindergarten class. During the rainy season, rain water seeps through the leaking roof of the classroom block. The school boundary wall is low and because of this the female teachers feel vulnerable. Inside the classrooms, there is no furniture or electricity. There are only two latrines for teachers and students to share. Until recently, there were only two qualified, full time teachers at this school. This included the head teacher. Recognising this extremely high pupil-teacher ratio, the National Commission for Human Development (NCHD) provided the school with two additional part-time teachers. However, neither had any teacher training qualifications nor did they have any teaching experience or knowledge of the new syllabus. They act more as teacher assistants who maintain discipline particularly among the younger students. All the teachers have recently received refresher courses in English and Mathematics but given the adverse environment in which they teach, applying the new teaching methods and curriculum is almost impossible.

The district education office should be aware of the school's challenges because the AEO visits the school regularly. The Nazem has also visited the school. Yet nothing is being done. The district education office is in a difficult position because qualified teachers from outside Rohjan do not want to accept teaching posts at this school because of the poor school infrastructure and high insecurity in the area. Among the local community, there are no qualified teachers, particularly qualified female teachers. On the contrary, teachers described the community to be a hindrance to student performance. Parents are more concerned with sustaining their immediate livelihoods through cotton farming which can also mean taking children out of school during harvest season to help in the fields.

Despite the limited facilities at this school, enrolment and attendance are high. The head teacher attributed this to the canisters of edible oil which are being distributed to students based on regular attendance by the WFP and remarked "since there is no fixed day on which the edible oil is distributed, parents have an incentive to send their children to school regularly." High student attendance is a good thing but it should not mask the poor quality of education that students are receiving at this school. Moreover, the head teacher felt that high enrolment should not be encouraged through take-home rations of food unless the school can support the increased enrolment in terms of infrastructure and teaching staff.

#### **Government Elementary School for Boys, Jampur, Rajanpur District**

This is a primary school section of an elementary school which dates back to 1890. It is located on the main motorway connecting Rajanpur and DG Khan. In the primary section, student enrolment is 488 and there are five classrooms. Although the students sit on the floor, the teacher has a desk and blackboard and the walls are decorated with student's drawings and visual aids.

The school has electricity which means the classrooms have lights and ceiling fans. The age of the school combined with limited maintenance mean some of the buildings are in a state of disrepair. Nevertheless, there are bricked pathways leading to classrooms, the gardens are tidy and the students have access to four water wells with hand pumps and one tube well with an electrical motor which was a contribution from the community. The school has nine teachers, all of whom have undergone primary teacher training programmes. Some have bachelors and even Masters degrees.

The school is easily accessible by public transport and therefore receives frequent visits from the district education office. Moreover, the teachers are all from the local area of Janpur which makes the commute to school easy. In terms of community support channelled through the SMC, teachers spoke very positively about the efforts of the SMC to encourage parents to send their children to school in spite of their poverty and the need for helping hands in the cotton fields and brick kilns. Teachers spoke of a high level of respect among the community for teachers and the value of education. Parents show an interest in the progress of their children and according to the head teacher, are invited to parents' evenings three times a year. Given the school's relatively favourable teaching and learning conditions, the main criticism teachers expressed is their lack of involvement in education policy making.

#### **4. Teachers as educators**

The job of teaching in government schools in Punjab can be both frustrating and demoralising. Teachers' main concerns focused on issues of poor school infrastructure, lack of teaching and learning materials, limited supply of teaching and non-teaching staff, inappropriateness of the school curriculum and a lack of encouragement and support from the district education office, parents, the SMC and *Nazem*. This multitude of concerns is likely to negatively impact upon teacher performance and thereby to affect the quality of education.

##### **4.1 School infrastructure**

The standard of school infrastructure was alarmingly poor in most schools. Many schools lacked sufficient classrooms relative to the number of students<sup>6</sup>. Some classes took place outdoors under the shade of a tree and in some cases, different classes shared one classroom. Where classroom blocks did exist, they were frequently overcrowded, with up to three students sharing one bench. In many instances, there was no furniture at all and students were found sitting on dusty floors. Classrooms rarely had more than one fan, which resulted in students congregating under the one fan. Some schools had no electricity which - in the 45 degree heat - made the poorly ventilated classrooms so hot and stuffy that they became unusable. There were rarely educational decorations or displays of students' work on the walls.

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<sup>6</sup> At one stand-alone girls' primary school in Rajanpur, the student-classroom ratio was 233: 2.



*Outdoor teaching*



*Overcrowded classrooms*

Aside from classroom blocks, schools rarely had staff rooms and in some cases, there was no office for the head teacher. The condition of the latrines was very basic and the ratio of students to latrines was high. At one boys' school visited in Mianwali, teachers explained that the one latrine in the school was only used by teachers and that the 400 students were expected to go out of the school boundary to relieve themselves. In the past year, this resulted in a young boy at the school being run over when attempting to cross the road outside. Water supply is also limited. During break times, students were often seen queuing near water wells with hand-operated pumps.



*Boys drinking water next to latrine*



*Girls pumping water using hand pump*

Overall, girls' schools in Mianwali fared better in terms of infrastructure than those in Rajanpur and Hafizabad.

Maintenance and upgrading of school infrastructure is limited. Resources are of course inadequate but in addition, teachers complained about infrequent visits from the district education office to take note of infrastructural problems. Teachers suggested several reasons for the limited inflows of maintenance funds: poor management at the district level and a failure to prioritise schools with greatest need. Furthermore, a common perception of teachers was that education policy is urban biased rather than rural focused, referring to the fact that the more accessible schools are often in better condition and receive more frequent visits from district education officers.

Despite the apparent lack of government support for school infrastructure, there were several cases of head teachers, teachers and the community making personal contributions towards the purchase of fans, the painting of school buildings and even the construction of additional classroom blocks.

*“Using funds donated by teachers and the manual labour of our students’ parents, we managed to repaint an old classroom block and made it look like new!”* (Primary school teacher, Mianwali)

## **4.2 Supply of teaching and non-teaching staff**

In all three districts, teacher shortages especially for Science and Maths were considered a major hindrance to teacher performance in schools. Teacher shortages result in high student-teacher ratios, which undermine the quality of education provided to students as well as overburdening teachers. In addition, support staff (cleaners, guards and gardeners) was often lacking, which prevented teachers from concentrating on their core activities.

*“I feel so overwhelmed with teaching classes that I spend my weekends dealing with all administrative and clerical matters.”* (Head teacher of a girls’ school in Rajanpur)

## **4.3 Teaching methods**

Despite the challenging environment in which they work, teachers showed a surprising level of commitment to their students. Observation of classes revealed the mutually respectful relationship between teachers and students, the attempts of teachers to encourage student participation and the improvisation by teachers in the absence of visual aids.

### **4.3.1 Teaching and learning materials**

Effective classroom instruction is clearly hampered by the lack of blackboards in some classes, especially those taking place outdoors and the lack of basic stationery for the students, such as slates, exercise books and writing material. There was very little evidence of teaching aids available for use in the classroom. Teachers receive teaching aids during their teacher training but these kits are not replenished by the district office, leaving teachers to resort to their own resourcefulness to make charts, drawings and illustrations to aid the teaching process. Sometimes teachers dig into their personal finances to purchase globes and models. The lack of teaching and visual aids is a particular hindrance to teaching methods in Mathematics and Science classes. On average, boys’ schools in Hafizabad and Rajanpur were better than the girls’ schools in these districts in terms of equipment and teaching kits.

Despite these challenges, teachers showed resourcefulness and commitment. In some cases, teachers first reviewed the previous class and tested students’ comprehension by performing an informal test before starting a new topic. Student participation in class was encouraged by teachers asking questions and inviting students to write answers on the

blackboard; teaching was not simply about rote learning and repetition. Teachers also gave examples of creative activities which they introduce into the school day: sports days, Qu'ran recitations, quizzes and drama.

#### 4.3.2 Textbook distribution

Since one of the supposed achievements of the education sector reforms has been the introduction of free textbooks, the research team were keen to hear teachers' perspectives on the success of this scheme. According to the PESRP website, in 2003-4, 7.25 million students from class Katchi to class-V in the government schools of the Punjab were delivered free textbooks at a total cost of Rs. 494 million. During interviews and FGDs, teachers welcomed this policy of free textbooks and most mentioned that the district office had been active in distributing textbooks. However, they also pointed out that in some instances, there had been a shortfall in the quantity of books supplied relative to the number of students. The shortfall was particularly severe in Rajanpur schools. In other schools, the textbooks were received late which had an effect on teaching plans.

Teachers also suggested that in addition to textbooks, schools should be sent stationery because many of the students are unable to afford exercise books and writing equipment. Related to this point about needy students, some teachers suggested that the provincial office provide scholarships for needy and promising students who would otherwise be unable to afford to continue with their studies. Although primary school students do not pay tuition fees in Pakistan, there was evidence at some schools of a number of other funds, to which parents of students are expected to contribute. Some examples are medical, domestic, furniture, Red Cross, science equipment and sports. One school in Mianwali mentioned a promise from the district office to provide scholarships for hard working and needy students. However, this promise was yet to materialize.

#### 4.3.3 Teacher-student relationship

The teachers observed were capable of combining kindness, firmness and importantly, the ability to treat all students equally, irrespective of gender and background. In return, students were also respectful of teachers: they stood up when the teacher entered the classroom and the teacher greeted the students with a '*Salaam*'. There was no evidence of teachers administering corporal punishment in the classes observed. To show their authority, teachers used their eyes or a loud voice. To encourage students in class, teachers clapped and praised students. There was also evidence of praise in students' exercise books. Most teachers were present during class but there were some teachers who were simultaneously trying to keep an eye on another class, in which the teacher was absent.

#### 4.3.4 Assessment of student performance

Teachers attempt to assess student performance by allocating homework at the end of a class, sometimes in preparation for a test. However, when the researchers looked through students' exercise books, it was apparent that homework was not always corrected. Class

time was also not spent reviewing homework. Teachers, usually in collaboration with the head teacher, set and invigilate exams as another marker of student performance. However, the issue of automatic student promotion to the next level - irrespective of exam results - was an area of recent educational reforms that teachers were unhappy about. They felt that by rewarding poorly performing students, hard work would not be encouraged and students would become lazy and complacent.

#### **4.4 English in the school curriculum**

Teachers complained about the introduction of English as a taught subject at the primary level. There was a feeling that English should be introduced at middle school or secondary level. Teachers felt that students were not able to master English with ease at such a young age and also that where they did exist, experienced and trained English teachers were frustrated at having to teach the language at such a basic level. In most cases, however, schools did not have specialist English teachers. Others argued that curriculum reform – particularly the increased emphasis on English - was essential if government schools are to compete with the private sector.

#### **4.5 Inspection visits**

Contrary to common expectations of teachers fearing inspection, in many instances, teachers were actually calling for more interaction between the school and district education office. A group of male AEOs interviewed in Mianwali claimed to visit an average of five schools per week, during which they verify the number of children in school, observe student behaviour, monitor attendance and absenteeism of students and teachers, observe the performance of teachers and the physical condition of the schools (buildings, electricity, furniture, access to clean drinking water). This information is apparently recorded in a log book and any problems are brought to the attention of the district education office.<sup>7</sup>

However when triangulating the interviews of AEOs with teachers perceptions, it was evident that inspection visits are far from regular and experiences with such visits tend to vary widely across schools in the three districts.<sup>8</sup> At best, a school may receive a visit from the district office once in a month. At worst, one teacher remarked:

*“The EDO has come only once in the two years since I have been teaching at this school and I have never seen any other district officer inspecting our school.”* (Primary school teacher, Mianwali)

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<sup>7</sup> Since the research team only managed to meet with a group of male AEOs, it was not possible to identify the different constraints in monitoring faced by male and female AEOs although this is certainly an issue worth further investigation.

<sup>8</sup> The irregularity of visits from the district office became clear during the fieldwork conducted by the research team. The team was usually accompanied by an officer from the district education office who was met with surprise and sometimes even hostility from teachers and the head teacher at the school.

One possible reason for the irregularity of school visits could be that AEOs - as they claimed - rarely receive their daily travel allowances. Another AEO complained about frequent meetings at the district education office (up to three times per month) which disrupts his core business of visiting schools.

#### **4.6 Parental support**

Both male and female teachers across the districts emphasised the crucial role of parents in ensuring that teachers are supported in their efforts as educators and that children get the most out of their learning experience. The reality is that parents are often reluctant to interact with teachers. The problem is worse when the parents have not themselves attended school. They often feel overwhelmed and unsure of why their opinions in school matters are important. Some teachers felt that parents can also be uncooperative because they lack respect for teachers and do not appreciate the value of education for their children. Other teachers understood the problem of undervaluing education to be driven by poverty which creates a high opportunity cost of education: wages from farm labour or working in brick kilns to give two examples.<sup>9</sup>

##### 4.6.1 Student attendance

An outcome of a lack of parental support is irregular student attendance, which sometimes leads to drop out, thus undermining the efforts of teachers as educators. In rural areas, where livelihoods depend on farming, children's labour (both girls and boys) is needed during harvesting seasons and this can prevent them from attending schools. The visits to schools in Rajanpur district in late September coincided with the season for harvesting cotton and as a result student attendance at rural schools was as low as 52% in one of the girls' schools visited. The head teacher confirmed that this was well below the average of 80%. By contrast, at the urban boys' school visited in the same district, attendance was 98%. The scenario in Mianwali and Hafizabad, where lentils and rice were being harvested during the visits, was similar but the extent of absenteeism was not nearly as high as in Rajanpur. In fact, the majority of student absenteeism in Mianwali and Hafizabad can be accounted for by the students of lower classes (Kindergarten and Class 1), whose parents are reluctant to send them to schools with poor facilities, especially in the hot season.

Another factor which, according to teachers, undermines student attendance of some schools in Rajanpur is the close proximity of schools targeted by donors for certain projects such as school feeding and take-home rations of edible oils. Indeed, one of the six schools included in the sample in Rajanpur provides – with financial support from the World Food Programme (WFP) – provides canisters of edible oil to students based on their record of attendance; as a result, the head teacher claimed that attendance is

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<sup>9</sup> This section on parental support would have been enriched if the research team could have had the opportunity to cross check teachers' perceptions with those of the parents. Indeed, if the education system is failing to meet the expectations of the parent, for example, if the parent suspects the child is not learning anything because the teacher is frequently absent, mistreating the child or not teaching effectively, the parent may remove the child from school.

consistently over 90% but that student attendance at a nearby school without donor supported programmes has suffered.

#### **4.7 School Management Committees (SMCs)**

School Management Committees (SMCs) were formed in 1994 in the province of Punjab and involve the gradual devolution of management functions away from the centre and towards districts and schools. In theory, the SMC could be a vehicle for promoting a partnership between parents and other 'respectable' members of the community (for example, retired teachers) and the school. They could be used to sensitise parents about their role in encouraging regular attendance of their children to prevent drop out<sup>10</sup> and to mobilise community resources to improve schools<sup>11</sup>, monitor teachers and voice community concerns to local government. For example, at one of the schools visited in Mianwali, the SMC has approached the local community to help improve an existing school boundary wall, which currently poses a threat to the students' security. Thus, a functioning SMC has the potential to act as a form of support to students, teachers and the head teacher.<sup>12</sup>

However, out of the 18 schools visited, 70% reported poorly functioning or non-functioning SMCs. Where they did exist, they were often not powerful enough to influence the district office. A recent development is the criteria for appointing a chairperson for the SMC; this position was previously held by the head teacher but is now a political appointment held either by the *Nazem* (an elected representative of the district) or someone nominated by him/her. This has implications for the way SMCs disburse funds: the *Nazem* is the controller of finances and there is no clear line of accountability. Previously the head teacher as chairperson was accountable to various staff at the district education office. Interviews with head teachers and district officers about this issue revealed a great deal of concern about the transparency of this new system.

#### **4.8 Nazem support**

As a result of devolution in the education sector, the *Nazem* is responsible for proposing the education budget to the District Council. This should provide more reasons for *Nazems* to interact with local schools. However, visits from *Nazems* to schools in this research sample were extremely varied. One noted that the *Nazem* had visited her school only because his own daughters attend the school but that he had failed to fulfil his promises to improve school security and the school infrastructure. Another head teacher praised the *Nazem* for helping to obtain an electricity connection. Other schools pointed

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<sup>10</sup> The SMC has an incentive to raise student enrolment because this sometimes leads to additional funds from the district education office. Sensitisation of parents is also seen as important role for the SMC in some rural areas where girls are married off aged as young as 12.

<sup>11</sup> SMCs were reported to have contributed towards building latrines, mosques and water wells and in maintaining school buildings.

<sup>12</sup> The SMC could also play a useful role in appointing substitute teachers, thus ensuring the system responds flexibly to the reality of frequent teacher absences. However, this was not a topic explored in the course of this research.



out that they had not yet received any visits. Rural or inaccessible schools on average received fewer visits from both *Nazems* and district education officers. In sum, the influence of local politicians on the level of support and interest from the education district office is disappointing.

## **5. Teachers as employees**

There were several human resource management issues which emerged in interviews as being of concern to teachers: confusion surrounding the function of Annual Confidential Reports (ACRs); the inadequacy of systems for sanctioning poorly performing teachers and the failure to reward teachers performing well with incentives, rewards, promotion and training opportunities. In addition, teachers felt that the new fixed-term contract is having some unintended consequences on teachers' incentives. In spite of the relatively attractive remuneration package offered to new recruits, without job security and opportunities for professional development, teachers feared that the new recruits would quickly become demoralised.

### **5.1 Annual Confidential Reports (ACRs)**

The Annual Confidential Report (ACR) is the primary means of assessing teacher performance. It was not clear from the research findings whether this procedure is being used to evaluate the performance of newly recruited teachers on fixed term contracts. Who is responsible for writing the ACR was also a matter of confusion among the teachers interviewed: some said it was the duty of the head teacher, others said it was a job for the AEO. In some cases teachers admitted to completing their own ACRs before passing them onto the head teacher for a signature. In the Mianwali sample, one third of teachers interviewed had no knowledge of whether ACRs are written for them. A few head teachers claimed to use one-to-one discussions to talk to poorly performing teachers before writing the ACR. Yet the dominant view of teachers was as follows:

*“The head teacher fills in the form but never gives us feedback or consults us in the process.” (Female teacher, Mianwali)*

### **5.2 Sanctioning of teachers**

There was no evidence in any of the districts of teachers (either on the old or new-style contracts) being *formally* sanctioned for poor performance. This does not mean that head teachers do not informally offer suggestions to teachers who are not performing adequately. At one girls' primary school in Rajanpur, the head teacher confirmed that there had not been a single case of formally sanctioning or disciplining a teacher in the past 9 years that she had been at the school. The EDO in Rajanpur revealed that the politicisation of teaching made it virtually impossible to dismiss incompetent teachers.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> The DDEO in this district once attempted to suspend teachers who were frequently absent. However, he later discovered that these teachers had been re-instated and that their salaries had not been deducted as he had recommended. Such instances undermine the authority of the DDEO and reduce their effectiveness in managing and inspecting schools.

Teachers often neglect their duties in the school in favour of serving powerful landlords and industrialists yet the EDO concerned feared for his and his family's security if he were to exercise his authority by dismissing these teachers. As such, for those on permanent contracts, teaching becomes a job for life. It will be interesting to see whether the introduction of fixed-term contracts creates a climate of insecurity which forces a teacher to prove him/herself.

### 5.2.1 Teacher attendance

One negative aspect of teacher performance, for which teachers are rarely sanctioned, is irregular attendance as a result of which teacher-student contact time suffers. When factoring in the long summer holidays<sup>14</sup> and the harvesting seasons when teachers absent themselves from schools to attend to farming activities contact time is already low. Add to this absenteeism due to teachers giving private tutorials, running small businesses to top up their teaching salaries (usually male teachers) and staying home to care for sick relatives.

In all districts, there was evidence either of long term absence without provision of teaching cover or of vacant posts unfilled for a long time. In the photo of the register below, on which teacher attendance is displayed, one teacher out of the total cadre of five teachers at this school in Mianwali was away for maternity leave ('M.T. Leave'). The head teacher explained that over the 3 months that the teacher would be away, no replacement teacher was being sent by the district office.



This register, has the title "Teacher Attendance" and contains the following columns of information, from right to left: teacher name, date, present, absent, time of arrival at school, time of departure from school and a column for remarks which the head teacher has signed and dated. Thus the systems are in place for monitoring teacher attendance yet they do not seem to be a major deterrent to absenteeism.

## **5.3 Teacher incentives and rewards**

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<sup>14</sup> The school visits planned for this research were significantly delayed because summer holidays were even longer than usual due to the heat wave which resulted in the provincial office delaying the re-opening of schools after the summer break.

There are currently few incentives for teachers, either in terms of monetary rewards or professional recognition. At one girls' school in Rajanpur, an example was given of a Rs 10,000 prize awarded to two teachers in 2002 to reward good performance. However, the school had not since received any such funds. In addition, no incentives are offered for teachers to take up rural posts, despite the fact that these are often unattractive places of work with few facilities.

On the whole teachers were in favour of a more meritocratic system for rewarding teachers rather than promoting teachers simply on the basis of seniority and years of experience. Suggestions were made for a "best teacher" award and the use of bonuses for rewarding good performance.

### 5.3.1 Teacher promotion

A number of teachers complained that the processes for reviewing promotion cases are too slow and rather obscure. In addition, there was the familiar reference to personal and political influences on promotion decisions, rather than the process being based purely on merit. It remains to be seen how promotions will be dealt with in the future given that fixed term contracts make the previous system of 'move-over promotions' redundant.

### 5.3.2 Training opportunities

Providing opportunities for professional development, such as refresher courses, is another way of rewarding promising teachers. A large proportion of teachers interviewed had recently received refresher courses especially in Maths and English. Despite this, teachers felt unable to keep up with frequent changes in the curriculum. When asked about systems for accessing in-service training, the biggest complaint from teachers was the existence of patronage networks.

*"Teachers who are on good terms with the head teacher and district office are more likely to get promoted."* (Primary school teacher, Rajanpur)

In addition, it was remarked that schools tend to send more experienced teachers for training, leading to a growing gulf in the abilities of experienced and inexperienced teachers.

Teachers also pointed to the inherent bias towards training teachers at stand alone primary schools as compared to those at primary sections of secondary schools. In general, teachers felt that stand alone primary schools are given more attention by the district office and that as a result primary sections of middle/secondary schools have poorer infrastructure and facilities. In addition, when it comes to visits from the district office, teachers pointed out that the primary section of a high school is often neglected.

As for in-service training which would involve study leave rather than training during school breaks (for example, undertaking a Masters in Education), teachers explained that they are not aware of any procedure to apply for study leave. Moreover, any leave taken

to undertake training or even to sit for exams counts towards a teacher's annual leave entitlement.

### 5.3.3 Teachers' salaries

Late receipt of salaries, rather than the salary level, was a frequent complaint from teachers. When salaries are regularly late (in some cases by up to 3 weeks), teachers are understandably left frustrated, demoralised and in financial hardship. All of these factors are detrimental to teacher performance. Again, teachers at stand alone primary schools fared worse because they have to rely on the AEO responsible for the school to fill out the salary bill, collect the teachers' salaries from the district education office and pay the teachers in cash. At primary schools which are attached to middle or high schools, the payment of salaries is usually handled by an accounts clerk who arranges for the funds to be deposited into the school's bank account. For rural teachers, collecting their salaries from the school account is a problem because of the long distances to the urban area where the banks are located.

Teachers' salaries also came up as an issue in relation to the recent emphasis in the curriculum on English. To attract candidates who can specialise as English teachers, the starting salary for an English teacher is much higher than many experienced existing teachers<sup>15</sup>. Teachers were clearly unhappy with this policy, especially because the newly recruited English teachers also have a smaller workload whilst existing teachers manage all other subjects. On a similar note, the recent revision of pay scales to reward formal qualifications rather than practical experience was unpopular among the teachers interviewed. Senior teachers who were previously promoted to BPS 16 have had their pay scale revised to its original status (BPS 9) because education policy reforms stipulate that only teachers with a bachelor's degree can qualify for salary scale BPS 16 and above. This has affected teacher motivation, particularly in one of the schools visited, where there were seven high school graduates all with more than 20 years experience but no bachelor's degree. The head teacher of this school felt that this new policy should be effective only for the new recruits and not be made retrospective to include all teachers hired in the past, when high school graduates with a primary teaching certificate was the basic qualification for primary school teachers.

### 5.3.4 Fixed-term contracts

The introduction of fixed-term, school-specific (non-transferable) contracts have had some unexpected consequences. Short-term contracts should lead to greater flexibility to fill posts in areas with teacher shortages. By eliminating job security, they should also provide an incentive to contract teachers to work hard in order to increase their chances of winning another contract. However, the introduction of contract teachers has created a two-tier system of incentives, in which existing teachers on a job-for-life type contract have access to in-service training, transfer and promotion prospects and salary increments whilst the newly recruited teachers on fixed-term contracts do not have such entitlements.

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<sup>15</sup> English teachers – who have a BA/BSc and PTC or MA/MSc and PTC are recruited directly onto grade 14.

## Box 2: Experiences of a newly recruited ‘contract teacher’ in Hafizabad

*“I was recently recruited to work as a teacher at this school after applying for an advertised post. I was given a fixed term contract. The criteria for recruitment used to be merit but these days, who you know is more important than merit. I chose to be a teacher for several reasons: it’s a respectable job because in our religion, the Prophet Muhammad was a teacher. But the main reason I took this job is because there are no more job opportunities for me in our area.*

*I am not satisfied with the salary I receive and there are no possibilities for contract teachers to be transferred or promoted. We do get to attend trainings though. Last year, I was selected for one workshop; it was about teaching techniques and problems that teachers face. We do not have ACR forms at my school and I never receive feedback about my performance. The head teacher doesn’t guide us and the main reason for this is that the teachers are more educated than the head teacher. We don’t have any school management committee that I know of...maybe the head teacher knows about it. The parents of my students don’t have any role in their children’s education; they never ask me about their progress and never make sure their children do their homework.”*

Despite being offered higher starting salaries, they were often found to be demoralised<sup>16</sup>, which would suggest that non-financial benefits are equally if not more important for teacher morale. Moreover, many of the new recruits were posted at schools with teacher shortages and these schools are often in remote, rural and insecure areas. As a result, the new recruits were frequently absent as they searched for more attractive forms of employment. This has the perverse outcome of increasing instead of relieving the burden for existing teachers. In a climate of high unemployment, teaching has become a last resort for new graduates and this is having a clear impact on commitment to the profession. This seems a far cry from some of the motivations for teaching discussed in section 3.2, such as a desire to serve the nation and to associate oneself with a respectful profession.

All EDOs were of the opinion that given the high rates of teacher absenteeism arising from the awarding of non-transferable contracts, they should be given greater autonomy and flexibility to recruit replacement teachers. Head teachers and EDOs suggested that EDOs be given the authority to recruit local high school (Class 10) graduates to fill the vacancies in schools where contract teachers are refusing to teach.<sup>17</sup> Otherwise, filling vacant posts in such areas can take up to two years.

### 5.4 Female teachers as employees

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<sup>16</sup> It should be noted that of the 33-teacher sample, only 20% were on the new fixed-term contracts. In Rajanpur, the research team did not come across a single teacher on a fixed-term contract. Although the observations made here about the perspectives of teachers on the new types of contracts are based on a very small sample size, the issue of the new contracts was discussed in interviews with head teachers and during FGDs and overall, aroused a great deal of interest and opinion.

<sup>17</sup> The minimum entry qualification for contract teachers is a BA/BSc and PTC.

There are specific issues impacting upon female teachers' attendance at school which need to be highlighted. Female teachers are particularly prone to shouldering the burden of household activities and responsibilities to care for the sick/elderly at home than male teachers. Teacher absence – especially among female teachers - was also worse in rural areas, where there is greater physical insecurity, harassment and poorer facilities in schools, which significantly hamper the teacher's ability to perform effectively and make schools unattractive work places. The examples of *Mosa Khal*, a hilly area in Mianwali and *Rohjan*, an insecure area of Rajanpur were given as places where no qualified teacher, especially female, wants to be posted. The problem of insecurity is exacerbated if the school boundary walls are too low, or if there is no security guard.

## **6. Teachers as people**

Teaching is considered a respectable profession and many of the teachers were proud of this. Indeed a teacher has an important role in the community and a good teacher is seen as a role model to his or her students. As a result (and also due to the lack of alternative forms of employment, especially in rural areas), once they choose to become teachers, they are likely to remain in the profession. Thus investing in teachers should have long term pay offs. Teachers in this sample were reasonably happy about their work-home balance although in their daily lives as working people, many complained of transportation difficulties. The experiences of male and female teachers varied considerably in this regard and are contrasted in section 6.5 below.

### **6.1 Education and teaching qualifications**

Three-quarters of the teachers interviewed had a Primary Teacher Certificate (PTC). Other common qualifications of the group of teachers were bachelors, masters, FA and CT. One quarter of the teachers were high school leavers who had only completed their matriculation (equivalent to Class 10 at high school) but even in these cases, teacher training qualifications were common. Despite the relatively young age profile of most of the teachers, the number of years of teaching experience was very high. Two-thirds had over 12 years of teaching experience which suggests that the majority of teachers remain in the profession for a long time. One reason for this, especially in the rural areas is that there are few alternative forms of employment.

### **6.2 Teacher motivations**

The three most commonly mentioned motivations for becoming teachers were the respect accorded to teachers, no alternative forms of employment and a family tradition in the profession:

*“My father was a teacher so I am proud to be associated with this profession”.* (Male primary teacher, Mianwali district)

Another motivating factor was a desire and religious duty to contribute to the nation's development:

*“Teaching allows me to do something for my country.”*

*“Prophet Muhammad was a teacher.”*

(Male primary teachers, Hafizabad district)

A number of teachers mentioned that the fulfilment from teaching far outweighs the material benefits:

*“Financial benefits are very limited in this job, but the feeling one gets after teaching children is quite overwhelming, that is why I became a teacher”.* (Female primary teacher, Mianwali district)

Aside from the initial motivating factors, most teachers indicated a willingness to remain in the profession although some did say that if they had a better option, they would be willing to leave their teaching posts.

### **6.3 Describing a good teacher**

Through FGDs, teachers were asked to describe a ‘good teacher’<sup>18</sup>. The responses were a combination of personality traits and attitudinal factors. Punctuality and regular attendance at school were strongly emphasised. In terms of behaviour in the classroom, a good teacher is essentially a good person (honest, truthful and clean) who treats the students gently, with love and compassion. Some teachers also suggested that a good teacher behaves like a parent and role model for the students. In addition, a good teacher maintains regular contact with the students’ parents and the school management committee. Teachers also suggested that a good teacher prepares for class by reading the chapter which she will read to the students. Additional characteristics for a good head teacher include respect for teachers and students and the ability to maintain discipline with compassion and kindness rather than being excessively strict.

### **6.4 Daily challenges**

Teachers were asked about their daily experiences as working people and any difficulties they encounter. Transportation was the main out-of-school problem experienced by the teachers interviewed. When teachers are late, classes are delayed and students suffer the consequences. This is all the more so in single-teacher schools, in which case there is no additional teacher who can temporarily manage the class before the delayed teacher arrives.

The transportation problems that teachers face have been exacerbated by the appointment of teachers on fixed-term contracts. Although candidates for such positions are given a choice of three schools, the school-specific nature of these contracts has resulted in the appointment of teachers who do not belong to the *tehsil* where the school is located. This results in teachers having to travel long distances.

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<sup>18</sup> For more on perspectives of children, parents and teachers in four areas of Pakistan on what makes a good teacher, see report by Save the Children (UK), July 2001

## 6.5 Comparing male and female teacher experiences

At each of the 18 schools included in the sample, the research team interviewed the head teacher plus two teachers, giving a total of 36 teachers, with an equal share of male and female teachers. The age distribution of teachers was mainly in the range 27-38 with a few over 39 and only one in the age group 21-26. The average age of female teachers was slightly lower than male teachers. A large majority of both male and female teachers interviewed were married. Around 40% of the teachers mentioned 3-4 dependents at home (defined as members of the household whom they support financially) and 9 of the teachers spoke of more than 7 dependents. Male teachers tended to mention a larger number of dependents than female teachers. This is possibly because of greater societal expectations on them to provide for the household.

Of the 36 teachers interviewed, 28 said their average journey to school took under half an hour. However, there were at least 5 female teachers who complained of their journey to school taking between 1-2½ hours because of the long distance to school and their reliance on public buses, which are frequently late. Female teachers in Mianwali stood out as being particularly troubled by their journey to school. Relying on public transport was uncomfortable for them because it meant travelling with unfamiliar men. This is particularly problematic in rural, conservative areas such as Rajanpur where the female teachers claimed that teaching in a local school is virtually the only employment option which their families will allow them to consider because other forms of employment could involve commuting to the urban areas. The new school specific contracts which may be accompanied by long commutes are therefore unlikely to appeal to female teachers, especially in districts where there is a fear of insecurity and harassment.

Some of the female teachers who were interviewed respond to the transportation difficulties by collectively hiring a small minibus/van to collect them from their homes and transport them to the school, although they admitted that these minibuses ran on tight schedules, the timing of which did not always work with their domestic responsibilities.

Male teachers rarely mentioned transport as being a problem and this was because they had a number of modes of transport available to them. Although the majority walked to school in under ten minutes, use of bicycles and motorcycles was also an option. Only two mentioned the public bus as their mode of transport.

Despite the transportation difficulties experienced by some of the female teachers interviewed, on the whole, teachers portrayed their profession as relatively stress-free, leaving them with sufficient time to manage the household. Female teachers said they found time to care for children and male teachers were able to juggle farming activities without too much difficulty. Other after school activities which female teachers enjoyed were teaching the *Qu'ran* to other women, giving private (paid) tuition to students and reading. Male teachers mentioned running small businesses (for example, buying and selling cattle) and studying. In only one case, a female teacher expressed how stressful she found the job but related this mainly to the long commute to and from school, after which she is too exhausted to enjoy her leisure time.

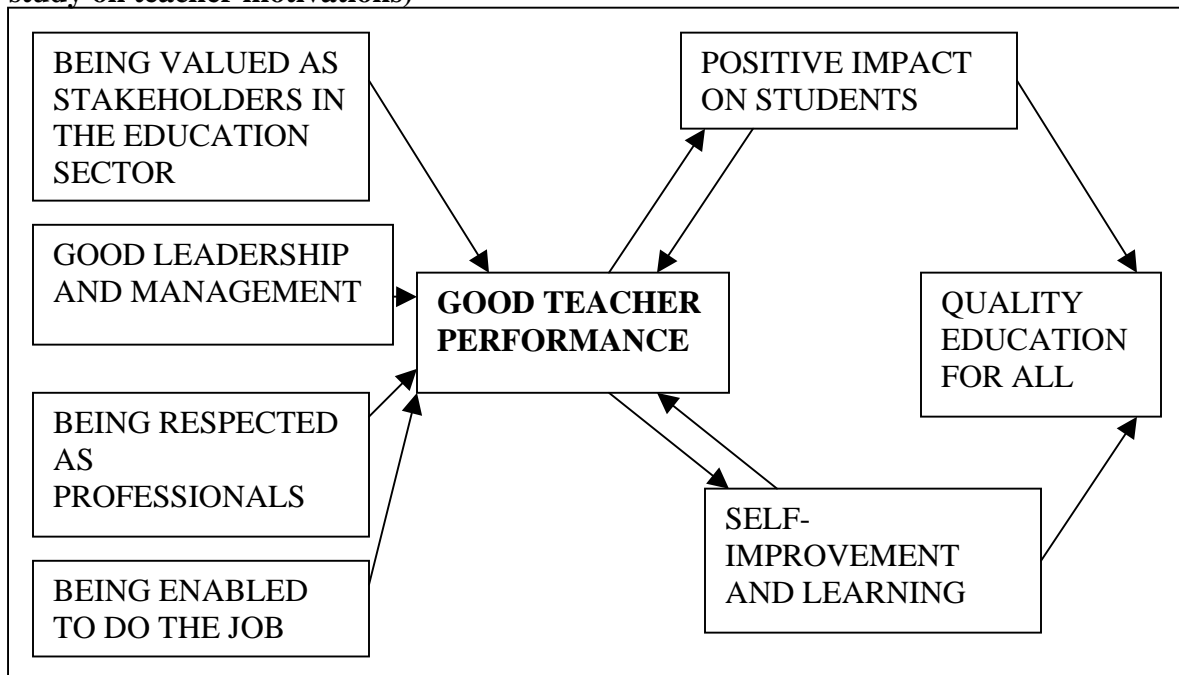


## 7. Conclusions and Recommendations

When considering new education policy directions, the voice of teachers is rarely heard by policymakers. Rather than regarding teachers as partners in education planning and reform, they are treated as passive implementers of decisions. This leaves teachers disempowered and lacking in agency. Yet, as this research has shown, teachers have important opinions on education policy matters that are solidly grounded in their own professional experiences. Surely it is teachers, who are in the best position to identify factors which affect their performance and since teacher performance is so directly linked to the quality of education, the voices of teachers must be taken seriously by decision makers.

The box below summarises the main inputs and outputs of good teacher performance, as perceived by teachers:

### Box 3: Inputs and outputs of teacher performance (adapted from VSO Zambia study on teacher motivations)



This study proposes a number of recommendations which follow from the framework above. Along with each recommendation are some concrete steps. These recommendations are the result of analysis of teachers' perspective, and the experience of VSO in the field. They are for consideration by government, development partners and NGOs. It was teachers who identified these steps as being priority areas for the consideration of education decision makers'.

### 1. Value teachers as stakeholders in the education process

- Involve teachers in planning, designing and decision-making stages in order to ensure successful delivery and implementation of new policy. This suggestion could be taken into account if District Education Plans are developed in the future for Mianwali, Rajanpur and Hafizabad districts.
- Assess the recent education sector reforms in due course using teachers' perceptions as a key source of information. Areas for future assessment could include: (i) a study of the effectiveness of fixed term contracts in terms of intended benefits for teacher motivation, performance and the quality of education and (ii) an enquiry into the actual and/or perceived bias which favours urban schools and primary sections within middle/high schools.

## **2. Provide teachers with effective support structures, especially leadership and management**

- Strengthen the relationship between schools and the district education office by conducting more school visits by district staff (which include feedback to schools) and instituting a faster and more transparent system for dealing with transfers, promotions and postings.
- Encourage greater parental involvement in school matters in order to improve student attendance rates, whilst recognising that rural parents in situations of poverty face a high opportunity cost of sending their children to school.
- Strengthen the role of the SMC as a support structure for teachers. Review the organisational structure of SMCs. As the chair is now a political appointment that is not accountable to the EDO, there needs to be a mechanism through which the position and the use of SMC funds are accountable and transparent.

## **3. Make teaching a respected and attractive profession for both male and female teachers**

- Address the transportation difficulties faced by teachers in certain areas. The district office could make provisions for a school bus or provide a transport subsidy to teachers.
- Recognise the different needs and experiences of male and female teachers.
- In order to boost morale and to return to the days when teaching was a well-respected profession, find innovative ways to publicly value teachers. For example, provide 'best teacher' awards and announce these on the radio; organise annual events which get teachers and education policy makers from federal, provincial and district levels together, such as World Teachers' Day and draw from VSO's experience with the global campaign on Valuing Teachers.

## **4. Enable teachers to be teachers**

- Recruit more teachers and support staff (cleaners, gardeners and security staff) to relieve the burden on the existing cadre of teachers.
- Address the serious infrastructure problems and limited teaching supplies in schools which adversely affect the ability of teachers to teach.
- In areas with chronic teacher shortages arising from unfilled posts and frequent absenteeism, devolve the responsibility for recruitment to EDOs. This would

provide flexibility to recruit local teachers who are high school leavers rather than graduates as the PESRP recommends. Note that this recommendation is based on the assumption that mechanisms for ensuring transparency and accountability are first established and also that any unqualified teachers recruited into the system, as a desperate measure, are later given the opportunity to upgrade their skills.

- Ensure greater coordination between public and private (i.e. NGO) schools, avoiding situations where government primary schools are unable to compete with nearby NGO schools offering food to attract and retain students.