



TEACHERS SPEAK OUT
A POLICY RESEARCH REPORT ON
TEACHERS' MOTIVATION AND
PERCEPTIONS OF THEIR PROFESSION
IN THE GAMBIA

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This research has involved the combined efforts of a number of people. I would like to thank David Clamp (Country Director) and Nuha Jatta (Education Programme Manager) of VSO The Gambia and Lucy Jenks and Stephen Nock, among others, of VSO International for their involvement and contributions throughout the research process. I would also like to thank Matarr Baldeh of the EFA Campaign Network, and Baboucarr Jeng and Janet Mansel of The Gambia Teachers' Union, whose assistance throughout the planning and analysis of this research has enriched the outcome; Demba Tamba, Alhagie Jammeh and Lamin Danso – regional representatives for The Gambia Teachers' Union and the EFA Campaign Network – for their support in the data collection processes; all VSO education volunteers for the variety of assistance and contributions they gave throughout the research process; as well as the VSO programme office for logistical support. I would also like to thank the Department of State for Basic and Secondary Education in The Gambia for giving permission and support for this research to be conducted in schools.

And finally, special thanks to all those teachers and other stakeholders who have so kindly given their time and views.

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ACRONYMS

BESPOR	Basic Education Support for Poverty Reduction
DFID	Department for International Development (UK)
DoSBSE	Department of State for Basic and Secondary Education
DoSE	Department of State for Education (now divided into the two ministries: Department of State for Basic & Secondary Education and Department of State for Tertiary & Higher Education)
DoSFEA	Department of State for Finance and Economic Affairs
EFA	Education for All
EMIS	Education Management Information System
FIOH	Future in Our Hands
FTI	Fast Track Initiative
GTU	Gambia Teachers' Union
HTC	Higher Teaching Certificate
ILO	International Labour Organization
INSETT	In-service Teacher Training
KQ	Koranic Qualified Teacher
KUQ	Koranic Unqualified Teacher
MDG	Millennium Development Goal
PMO	Personnel Management Office
Pro-PAG	Pro-Poor Advocacy Group
PRSP	Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper
PSC	Public Service Commission
PTA	Parent-Teacher Association
PTC	Primary Teachers' Certificate
QT	Qualified Teacher
RED	Regional Education Directorate
RIFT	Remedial Initiative for Female Teachers
SMC	School Management Committee
TLM	Teaching and Learning Materials
TT	Teacher Trainee
UNESCO	United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization
UQT	Unqualified Teacher
VSO	Voluntary Service Overseas

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

As countries reach the halfway point to reaching the Millennium Development Goals in education in 2015, concentration is placed on whether or not the targets for quality Education for All (EFA) are to be met. The Gambia is prioritising education through its most recent Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP) and Education Policy, which has been developed into a more detailed strategic plan. It is in this context that VSO The Gambia, with its partners the Education for All Campaign Network and The Gambia Teachers' Union, has undertaken research into issues affecting teachers, specifically to find out from teachers what issues affect their motivation and morale. The focus on teachers is in recognition of the key role they play in the quest for quality education.

Teachers from 24 schools across the country shared their views as part of the research, which involved other stakeholders at community, regional and national level. They raised a number of issues that affect their motivation levels and morale, and that further impact both on how they believed they performed inside the classroom and on levels of teacher retention within the public sector.

The issues affecting teachers were wide ranging, from school-level management to living conditions. Through analysis and discussion with stakeholders in the education system, six key thematic areas emerged from the concerns teachers, head teachers and other stakeholders currently have in The Gambia:

- 1 terms and conditions of service
- 2 training and professional development
- 3 teacher distribution
- 4 teachers' voice and professional relationships
- 5 school facilities
- 6 status and value.

In each of these key areas, teachers made recommendations for the improvement and strengthening of the education system. Issues specifically affecting female teachers were also identified, and have been incorporated into the discussions of each area and into Chapter 3: Conclusions and Final Recommendations.

TERMS AND CONDITIONS OF SERVICE

Terms and conditions cover a range of issues for teachers – they discussed their salary levels, allowances available to them, as well as systems of payments. Teachers feel their current salary does not meet their basic living needs. Issues of late payment further compound the problems of teachers struggling to make ends meet on a month-by-month basis. Further terms of service, such as maternity leave, do not meet the needs of teachers.

TRAINING AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Training and pathways for professional development and promotion are seen as key. Teachers are dissatisfied with the current provisions for training. Teachers who have received pre-service training feel there is a lack of opportunity for further development following qualification. Unqualified teachers would like the opportunity to receive training and improve professionally. Further professional development is hampered by a slow and inefficient promotion system, which is demotivating teachers who have been in the service for an extended period of time.

TEACHER DISTRIBUTION

The provision of quality education across the country relies on sufficient numbers of teachers and their equal distribution. The Gambia is currently dealing with a teacher shortage, the effects of which are felt to different degrees across the country. Teachers' postings can involve significant life changes; issues relating to teacher distribution therefore have a serious impact on the morale of teachers.

TEACHERS' VOICE AND PROFESSIONAL RELATIONSHIPS

For teachers to feel motivated, it is important that they feel supported in their work and their voice is heard and listened to. Communication was found to be a problem for teachers, especially in rural areas, and this went on to impact on professional relationships from school to national level.

SCHOOL FACILITIES

Teachers' working environment affects their ability to teach and has an impact on children's ability to learn. Additional school facilities, such as adequate toilet facilities and in some schools staff quarters, are vital to sustain the motivation levels of teachers. School facilities at present are variable; conditions are often difficult and teachers are working in poorly ventilated, dusty classrooms with inappropriate space and, at times, furniture. Living conditions, especially for teachers in rural areas, are poor with limited staff quarters available.

STATUS AND VALUE

Status in society and the level to which teachers feel valued and taken account of in society and within the education system itself, affects the motivation of individuals to become and then to remain teachers. Teachers feel their status has decreased over time. They now feel there is a lack of respect for their profession and this affects how teachers are viewed within the community and the classroom.

Many of these issues are already recognised within the current education sector strategic plan in The Gambia. The table in Appendix 2 outlines how the conclusions, key recommendations made by teachers and current policy fit together. A key recommendation is the development of the Teachers' Service Commission, as laid out in the Education Policy, which would improve the issues teachers face in a number of areas, from recruitment to an efficient promotion and postings system.

SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

TERMS AND CONDITIONS OF SERVICE

Improved salary conditions should take into account and be commensurate with the fact that, as a signatory to the ILO, The Gambia should follow and aim to achieve the recommendations set out in the *1966 ILO/UNESCO Recommendation Concerning the Status of Teachers* (see Appendix 3).

- Allowances and social assistance schemes should be used by government to improve further the financial circumstances and security of teachers. Those involved in the research suggested the following as possibilities:
- health insurance scheme for teachers
- payment of school fees of the children of teachers
- housing schemes to encourage teachers to stay in the profession.
- Maternity leave conditions should be increased to a minimum of six months and should include all female teachers.
- Late payment should no longer be an issue of concern for teachers. Systems of payment should ensure timely and appropriate payment of all teachers. Information on payment should be made clear and readily available to teachers.

TRAINING AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

- Development of the Teachers' Service Commission as laid out in the Education Policy would improve the issues teachers face in a number of areas, from recruitment to efficient promotion systems. The processes for the introduction of a Teachers' Service Commission need to be carried forward in a speedy manner for the benefits to reach the teachers in the classroom. Working in conjunction with a sustained appraisal system at the Human Resource Directorate, these factors would lead to clearly defined and progressive career paths open to teachers.
- Training should be made available to teachers at all levels. Extension of programmes to upgrade teachers serving as unqualified teachers should be sought, as well as in-service training and continuing professional development for qualified teachers. Capacity should be created to ensure training can take place at regional and school levels. Head teachers and others in supervisory roles should be supported and trained for these roles in recognition of the crucial impact they have on the motivation of teachers.

TEACHER DISTRIBUTION

- A clear and coherent teacher Postings Policy should be fully implemented and teachers should be provided with clear and timely information regarding this. A Postings Policy should encompass provisions for the special case of female teachers. Teachers would also appreciate having more of a voice in the postings system.
- More teachers, in particular female teachers, need to be trained and encouraged (this encouragement is outlined through the recommendations from other themes) to stay within the profession, to limit the impact of teacher shortages on the work of other teachers within the schools.
- Teachers need to be made aware of the importance of equitable teacher distribution and encouraged to accept postings decisions to serve the national interest.

TEACHERS' VOICE AND PROFESSIONAL RELATIONSHIPS

- Teachers require greater access to means of communication and transport; provisions should be made for easy telecommunication with schools and transport should be provided for those in difficult-to-reach areas. At both central and regional level, communication channels such as newsletters and radio announcements can be used where appropriate to update schools and teachers with information.
- Appropriate training and material support should be given to education managers at all levels to ensure they are in the position to effectively and efficiently support the classroom teacher.
- Communication from Regional Education Directorates (REDs) should be regular, clear and concise. As policy lays out plans for organisational development of REDs, this in turn should lead to a more efficient system of information delivery from REDs to schools. Regular information such as term dates should be clarified and circulated at the earliest possible date.
- The use of cluster monitors should enhance the support and levels of communication teachers feel they receive and it is important cluster monitors are used in the manner set out in their

terms of reference and guidelines. When working in this way, cluster monitors should provide teachers with a level of support and supervision that adds to their sense of value, and in a way that would address any concerns they may have. Teachers should have clear information on the roles and responsibilities of cluster monitors and the support they are supposed to receive, as well as knowledge of the means of seeking redress where they are not receiving the appropriate support.

SCHOOL FACILITIES

- The Planning Directorate is responsible for classroom maintenance but further resources are required to meet the needs of school maintenance. These finances should be harnessed for maintenance to other school buildings and the provision of basic hygiene requirements to all schools. Where necessary, prioritisation should be made to ensure the schools in greatest need receive attention in the fastest possible time.
- Teaching and learning materials need to be sufficient to meet demands of class sizes, with greater access to materials for practical subjects.
- Increased numbers of good quality staff quarters should be available in schools. Teachers also recommend provisions of basic furniture and access to electricity through development of solar power systems.
- Staff quarters should be safe and suitable for female teachers living alone.

STATUS AND VALUE

- Best Teacher Awards recognise the role of quality and hard-working teachers. The Gambia Teachers' Union (GTU) Best Teacher Award programme should be extended to provide a greater celebration of the status of teachers and encourage positive recognition of teachers in society.
- Community sensitisation should be undertaken to highlight the importance of education and the role of teachers, especially among communities that are seen as hostile to the school system. Additionally, parents should be made aware of their role in education and use of the newly developed Parent-Teacher Association constitution should strengthen school and community links.
- Students should be clear of their responsibilities within education, and misconceptions on the issue of child rights should be clarified to avoid misuse.

INTRODUCTION

“Teachers are the most important resource in schools” DoSE 2006.¹

In acknowledgement of the importance of teachers in the delivery of quality education, VSO The Gambia has been working with partners to look into the issue of teacher motivation and morale and how this fits with education goals and commitments. As countries focus on attaining commitments made on Education for All (EFA), first at Jomtien and most recently at Dakar in 2000, the above statement shows government recognition of the vital role that teachers play in ensuring quality education is accessible to all. The Gambia has committed itself to reaching the targets of EFA and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) by 2015 and in doing so is committed to improving the access to and quality of education available to all. As the Department of State for Basic and Secondary Education recognises, it is clear that investment in teachers is a vital element in reaching the global targets.

Through almost 50 years’ experience of working in education in over 20 developing countries, VSO has recognised a trend in which teachers’ voices are all too often unheard among the planning and decision making for reaching these ambitious global targets. Yet it is the teachers’ responsibility to implement and work towards the success of these plans. As such, VSO is endeavouring to listen to the voices of teachers, to find out and highlight their views with the aim of sparking change and the anticipated benefits this will bring to the delivery of quality education. The Valuing Teachers project coordinated by VSO is now underway in 13 countries and it continues to grow.

VSO The Gambia has been working in education for over 40 years. Our work now concentrates on teacher training elements both at the teacher training institution, Gambia College and in the field, working with untrained teachers in rural areas. In undertaking the Valuing Teachers project, VSO The Gambia has been working in partnership with the EFA Campaign Network and its partners, in particular The Gambia Teachers’ Union. Together the partners have striven to hear from teachers the issues that are most affecting their motivation and morale, and in turn the way they are able to perform in the workplace. Teachers have given their recommendations on how they would like to see improvements made (see Appendix 1 for methodology). This report is a culmination of these efforts and is the first step in a process for change and improvement.

The objectives of the research within The Gambia were:

- to find out from teachers the factors that increase their enjoyment of their job and the factors that have a more negative impact on their outlook on teaching
- to obtain teachers’ recommendations on how improvements could be made to the teaching profession with the aim of improving levels of teacher motivation and morale
- to analyse policy and education documentation and the extent to which teachers’ issues are taken account of in current planning
- to use the information gained from teachers to promote change where necessary and beneficial within the profession.

This research has taken into account views from teachers nationwide, and in doing so it is hoped that what follows is a concise outline of the difficulties teachers are facing and how they believe improvements can be made.

1 Department of State for Education, Education Sector Strategic Plan 2006–2015, September 2006.

1 EDUCATION CONTEXT

1.1 SCHOOL SYSTEM

Since 2001, The Gambia has been operating nine years' uninterrupted free basic education. This encompasses three levels of schools Lower Basic (Grades 1–6), Upper Basic (Grades 7–9), and Basic Cycle (Grades 1–9). Entrance to Senior Secondary School is based on Grade 9 examination results. School fees are in place at secondary schools, mainly affecting boys, as girls' education programmes are providing a large number of scholarships to encourage higher numbers of girls into secondary education, although secondary school enrolments have not yet reached gender parity.

Schools are placed into different classes, depending on their size:

TABLE 1: SCHOOL SIZE AND CLASSIFICATIONS

Class	School Size (number of classes)
Class A	Single stream (one class per grade)
Class B	Double and triple stream (two or three classes per grade)
Class C	Five streams upwards (five classes per grade)

There are three types of schools within the conventional school system: public, grant-aided and private schools. Concurrent to the conventional school system is Madrassa schooling (Islamic/Arabic Education). Madrassa schools are provided with an English language teacher from the Department of State for Basic and Secondary Education (DoSBSE) and now have an agreed curriculum to cover all core subjects. Madrassa schools do not receive any financial assistance from DoSBSE, apart from the payment of the English language teacher. This research has based its findings from discussion with teachers from public schools, a small number of grant-aided schools and one Madrassa school.

1.2 EDUCATION STATISTICS

Enrolment rates within The Gambia are currently estimated at 91 per cent (15 per cent of which is Madrassa enrolment).² In 2005–6, 51.5 per cent of Lower Basic School enrolment was girls.

It is estimated that to meet the global targets for education, The Gambia will need between 6,700³ and 8,400⁴ additional primary teachers by 2015. At present, there are 4,479 teachers (including qualified and unqualified teachers, Koranic teachers and practising trainees). Table 2 provides an outline of the number of teachers and their distribution across the regions.

TABLE 2: TEACHER NUMBERS AND CATEGORIES

Region	Q	UQ	KQ	KUQ	TT	Total
1	589	106	69	40	0	804
2	928	135	120	75	263	1521
3	486	182	68	63	79	878
4	173	128	23	29	37	390
5	288	369	50	69	44	820
6	448	189	168	24	41	870
Total	2912	1109	498	300	464	4479

2 Department of State for Finance and Economic Affairs, *Poverty Reduction Strategy 2007–2011*, November 2006.

3 Department of State for Education, *Education Sector Strategic Plan 2006–2015*, September 2006.

4 UNESCO Institute of Statistics, *Teachers and Educational Quality: Monitoring Global Needs for 2015*, April 2006.

Numbers of female teachers are low in The Gambia and this can have a serious impact on the number of girls in education. Last academic year, only 19 per cent of teachers in the field⁵ were female, and it is worth remembering that the bulk of these female teachers is based in the more urban areas. It is not uncommon to find schools in rural areas with no female teachers whatsoever.

1.3 PARENT-TEACHER ASSOCIATIONS AND SCHOOL MANAGEMENT COMMITTEES

A new Parent-Teacher Association (PTA) constitution is currently in the final stages. It is intended to give the PTAs and School Management Committees (SMCs) formed in each school across the country a guideline for effective operation, to ensure school management is an open and inclusive process. At present, PTAs are in existence at every school but their activity and purpose varies between schools, as standards for use are different.

1.4 EDUCATION QUALITY

VSO'S DEFINITION OF QUALITY EDUCATION

"A child has a right to an education that is appropriate to their learning needs and prepares them for their future life. To deliver this, teachers need to be qualified and motivated, but on its own this is not enough. A child's ability to benefit from a good quality education also depends on parent and community involvement. School management and education policy must support child-centred education and be accountable to children, teachers, parents and community.

"VSO seeks to improve the content and delivery of education. This means ensuring children learn knowledge and skills that improve their life chances, and ensuring lessons and learning materials are relevant; reduce children's vulnerability to HIV & AIDS and discrimination; and improve their ability to maintain good health and to make a living. It also includes developing children's ability to learn through enjoyable, practical and interactive teaching and improving assessment processes so they reflect classroom learning."⁶

On the surface, The Gambia appears to be making good progress rates to Education for All with enrolment rates standing at around 91 per cent. However, without improvements to the quality of the education, this is of minimal benefit to the population and country as a whole. In 2000, a study was conducted looking at the learning achievements of students in The Gambia. The Monitoring and Learning Achievements Project found that 10 per cent of Grade 4 students were meeting the basic learning achievements for English and only 6.7 per cent were meeting these achievements for maths.⁷ Clearly, a large number of students was failing to meet the basic standards set by the education authorities. Although this data is somewhat dated, results from Grade 9 examinations for the academic year 2005-6 suggest the situation remains a serious concern.

In addition, further surveys and research have been conducted in The Gambia, identifying several problems and issues that schools and teachers are facing. The Education Select Committee in conjunction with the Pro-Poor Advocacy Group (Pro-PAG) conducted a school survey in 2005, which found clear evidence within the school system of a variety of issues that would impact on teachers. These included poor building standards, lack of resources, poor conditions and low motivation of teachers, teacher shortages and lack of staff quarters, among other issues that led to the report concluding overall that there "is a need for greater involvement of the legislature in the provision of quality education as envisaged in both the MDG and EFA goals".⁸

1.5 EDUCATION FINANCING

Although education expenditure is currently the highest output expenditure for state-provided services in The Gambia, accounting for 15 per cent of budgetary resources,⁹ this falls short of the 20 per cent recommended by the United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) as the minimum percentage of government budgets required to enable progress towards achievement of the EFA goals. In addition, the 2006 DoSE Public Expenditure Review found that between 2000 and 2004, there was a decline in spending in real terms of 10.2 per cent due to the budgetary situation in The Gambia.

6 VSO, *VSO and Education, 2007-2015*, February 2007.

7 Department of State for Education, *Monitoring and Learning Achievements (MLA) Project*, November 2000.

8 Pro-Poor Advocacy Group, *National Assembly Select Committee on Education and Training Report on School Survey*, 2005.

9 Department of State for Education, *Public Expenditure Review*, 2006.

Research conducted by Pro-PAG in The Gambia considered that, in previous years, “the education sector was not spending these resources wisely,”¹⁰ with salaries only accounting for 62.9 per cent of the budget in comparison to the Sub-Saharan Africa average of 90 per cent. The majority (77 per cent) of capital expenditure (school buildings, construction, technical assistance etc) is financed through loans, and of this, the bulk has been spent on classroom construction. Recurrent expenditures in education cover salaries, teacher training, teaching and learning materials etc, while development funds could cover all other forms of education financing, except salaries.

Teachers’ wages are paid through the civil service pay scale and funded through government funds set aside for this purpose. International financial institutions do not place specific caps on wage bills, but caps in place on public spending have a direct impact on the amount government can allocate to the payment of the public sector. Donor and loan money received for the education sector funds capital expenditure rather than recurrent expenditure. However, in recent years, a positive precedent has been set for donor funding of recurrent costs through the decision to use funding from the Fast Track Initiative (FTI) to provide hardship allowances.

10 Pro-Poor
Advocacy Group,
*Expenditure
Analysis on the
Nature and
Magnitude of
Resource
Allocation in the
Education Sector,*
2004.

2 TEACHERS' ISSUES AND RESEARCH FINDINGS

“Quality education cannot be possible if the human resource is lacking” (rural Lower Basic School teacher).

This chapter sets out the key issues affecting teacher motivation and morale within The Gambia. The research findings show that teacher motivation is in a state of flux. There are many discouraging factors for teachers and this led a large number of interviewees (over 50 per cent) to class their motivation levels as either low or very low. In addition, 28 per cent of those interviewed would consider leaving the profession in the next five years to seek greener pastures, and of those remaining within the profession, the majority plan to seek further training or promotion. Yet education is recognised as a key element in the quest for national development. In documents such as *Vision 2020* and the new Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP), education is prioritised as a means of developing a strong and reliable human resource base for the development of other sectors.

“Given the importance of the teacher factor in the provision of quality education, strategies to motivate and retain teachers will be put in place.”¹¹

As DoSBSE makes clear its policy commitment to teachers' welfare and development within the current Education Policy, this chapter will look at each of the themes in the context of policy and intended practice, and will go on to look at the situation on the ground based on findings from the teachers in the classrooms and other research participants.

2.1 TERMS AND CONDITIONS OF SERVICE

THE POLICY CONTEXT:

SALARY

Teachers are paid within the civil service pay scale. Qualified teachers (QTs) enter this pay scale at Grade 6; this is a higher point of entry than many other trained civil servants. Unqualified teachers (UQTs) enter the pay scale at Grade 1; this is a lower point of entry than auxiliary nurses or drivers for the Department of State for Education. The table below sets out the current civil service pay scale and the yearly increments awarded to each grade. All salaries and payments listed are quoted in Dalasis (exchange rate: £1=52 Dalasis, at time of publication: April 2007).

TABLE 3: INTEGRATED PAY SCALE FOR THE CIVIL SERVICE, AS OF JANUARY 2006

Grade	Starting Salary	Monthly Payment	Yearly Increment
1			
(starting salary of a UQT)	6,864	572	204
2	8,460	705	204
3	10,044	837	252
4	11,904	992	432
5	15,048	1,254	552
6			
(starting salary of a QT)	19,080	1,590	636
7	23,700	1,975	636
8	28,656	2,388	648
9	33,912	2,826	648
10			
(highest grade for management teachers)	3,9192	3,266	768
11	4,5936	3,828	768
12	5,1768	4,314	1,200

¹¹ Department of State for Education, *Education Policy 2004–2015*, May 2004.

To get an idea of how this fits in with the cost of living, one bag of rice costs 585 Dalasis. A working member of a compound would be expected to contribute this, as a minimum, to the household every month. Teachers are also under pressure to support extended families, which increases their financial responsibilities.

As Madrassa schools are not state funded, salary levels for teachers within these schools vary and are agreed at school organisation level. English language teachers posted within the Madrassa system are the only teachers paid through state funds. Due to the nature of funding for these institutions, the salaries in these schools are most often lower than those in conventional schools. However, payment in kind, through provision of food or accommodation, is more common among these schools.

ALLOWANCES

In addition to the basic wage, some teachers qualify for one or more of a range of allowances. See Table 4 below for an outline of teacher allowances:

TABLE 4: TEACHER ALLOWANCES

Allowance (monthly payment)	Region in Receipt of Allowance
Transport (500 Dalasis)	Region 1
Provincial (variable, 10– 15% of salary)	Part of region 2, and regions 3,4,5,6
Housing (60 Dalasis)	Regions 3,4,5,6
Hardship (40% of salary)	Selected areas in regions 3,4,5,6

The only allowance available to unqualified teachers is the hardship allowance, but only if they are working in a qualifying school.

Current policy recommends all teachers in Regions 3, 4, 5, and 6 receive hardship allowances. However, funding for such a wide-scale allowance increase is not currently available, so terms were drawn up to define 'hardship areas'. Regional directors agreed a hardship area would include schools that are hard to reach from the main road. Current funding for this allowance is from FTI funds and plans to extend the reach of this allowance are dependent on access to funding.

SALARY AND ALLOWANCE PAYMENT

Many teachers, especially newly qualified and unqualified teachers, receive their pay in cash through the paymaster. In theory, the paymaster should pay salaries and allowances directly to the teachers at their schools, but in practice, it is at times necessary to make payments at cluster or another local level. Payments should all be made by the last day of each month. Some teachers are paid through the bank system, but location of posting plays an important role in this, as there are very few accessible banks outside the Greater Banjul Area. This can have a knock-on effect to contact hours, if teachers have to travel to the banks when they should be in the classroom.

MATERNITY LEAVE

Only qualified female teachers are entitled to maternity leave. The current conditions for maternity leave stand at three months leave, six weeks to be taken before delivery and six weeks to be taken following delivery. Unqualified female teachers are not entitled to any leave and have to seek special arrangements on an individual basis with their school management. There are no provisions for paternity leave for any male teachers in The Gambia.

THE REALITY:

SALARY

“Our previous students are directors; they are driving cars and in big men’s compounds when we don’t even have cycles. This becomes a problem” (male teacher).

Teachers feel they are not being appropriately remunerated for their services. Although teachers enter the civil service salary scale at a higher grade than many other trained civil servants, in other ways they feel they do not have access to the same benefits. For example, they believed the conditions of nurses were more favourable due to the provision of furnished accommodation and the levels of payment for nurses working ‘double shifts’ or overtime. Teaching extra classes, which in itself can have an impact on teachers’ ability to provide quality education in the classroom, is the only means teachers have of supplementing their basic income. Teachers feel the current salary **“does not tally with living standards”** (male teacher). In urban areas, some teachers spoke of conducting extra classes as their only way to be able to adequately support their families. In rural areas, teachers pointed out the lack of financial capacity of parents to support extra classes as a further negative point in relation to rural postings.

Unqualified teachers in particular feel their income is not enough to meet their basic needs and support their family. One head teacher made the following point: **“Last year, four of the unqualified teachers left to join the security services, as the job is better paid”**. In comparing the current pay terms with the past, one teacher stated, **“In those days, salaries were low but an unqualified teacher’s salary would earn a bag of rice...but not now”**. As is clearly demonstrated through the pay scale table and the commodity prices mentioned above, unqualified teachers literally do not make enough money to buy a bag of rice. As many teachers live away from home, they often have to pay house rent as well as their food bowl: **“It is difficult being in an area and you receive your salary and you cannot even buy a bag of rice on it”** (female qualified teacher). Even focus groups consisting of only qualified teachers felt it was important to emphasise the problems of others in relation to the terms and conditions under which unqualified teachers are employed.

“We are educating people’s children but we cannot afford to educate our own” (female qualified teacher). Two female teachers described the difficulty they had as single parents trying to meet the needs of their children and their secondary education. One explained that, as a widow, she was raising four children on her income alone. This teacher worked the double shift system to increase her income; however, she commented that this left her with little time for family life: **“Teachers feel there is nothing there for them; they have to work in the classroom under difficult conditions, then of course teachers will be attracted to leave”**.

For qualified teachers, such salary issues lead some, especially in urban areas, to move to the private sector. An education official noted that in Region 1, attrition rates were high due to the movement of teachers to the private sector. Basic salaries within the private sector were considered to be around 4,000 Dalasis, with capacity for further earnings. Due to unattractive terms and conditions it was felt that **“people see teaching as a stepping stone”**. Teachers also felt there was little encouragement for long service within the field: **“You can teach until retirement age and still not have the finances to get a plot of land for a compound”**. Another teacher within an urban school stated, **“When I was a pupil at this school, he was my teacher. Now we are both teachers and we are on the same salary – there is no incentive there to stay in teaching”**. Teachers felt the only offer of help came from The Gambia Teachers’ Union (GTU) Credit Union facilities.

Teachers admit that issues relating to salary and thus their financial situation at home impacts on their performance in the classroom: **“[I end up] sitting in class thinking of the fish money for home”** (female teacher); **“In the classroom you are thinking about your family, how your income at the end of the month will feed them – how can you teach effectively? ...You cannot”** (female teacher).

ALLOWANCES

As the allowance system is variable, it affected different teachers in different ways. Those receiving it looked on the hardship allowance positively and evidence at directorate level suggests a greater acceptance and willingness to accept a posting in these 'hardship areas'. However, many others in rural areas not classed within the hardship zones felt the allowance was unfair. They felt they too faced the same burdens but were not being remunerated. Some head teachers also felt their schools were going to be disadvantaged, as a teacher would prefer to take a rural posting within a hardship area than in a school classed outside these areas. One of the greatest imbalances in the system was seen in the Basic Cycle schools, which received the hardship allowance. Due to the nature of the funding, which currently comes from the FTI (concentrating on the first six years of basic education), only teachers of Lower Basic classes receive the allowance while teachers of Upper Basic classes within the same school do not. Teachers in one such school felt **"the ministry is not treating us fairly"**.

Another issue of concern about allowances was that they are not sufficient to meet the needs of the teachers. For example, the housing allowance received by teachers is 60 Dalasis, but as one teacher states, **"There is no room here that you can get for 60D...anywhere in this country"**. Teachers at one school in a rural town area agreed the average rent in that area would be around 300 Dalasis. Even in more rural areas, where house prices are expected to be significantly lower, teachers spoke of paying around 175 Dalasis for a single room. In the urban areas, teachers spoke of paying rents anywhere between 500 and 1,000 Dalasis, accounting for 50–75 per cent of their salary. They were dissatisfied that they were not entitled to housing allowance. Teachers receiving transport allowance also felt that although it had recently improved, having doubled from 250 to 500 Dalasis, it still did not meet their needs.

Unqualified teachers felt their financial situation was further disadvantaged by not having access to additional allowances on top of their salary.

"Incentives and salaries are not much ... that is why teachers run away from teaching" (male teacher).

SALARY AND ALLOWANCE PAYMENT

Late salary payment was a problem highlighted by many teachers within the rural areas. It was particularly prevalent during the field research trek undertaken in the first week of the month in two of the regions covered, where teachers had not yet received their pay. The following case study highlights the issue for one school.

WHERE IS THE PAYMASTER?

School A is situated 9km from the main road. It is a small school with five teachers (including the Koranic teacher), two of whom are qualified teachers, and is serving around 230 pupils. It is the end of the first week in December and the teachers have still not received their November payments. Each day, the school has been trying to contact the paymaster but is unable to get a clear answer on when and where they will receive their pay.

This is not the first time these teachers have been paid late; during the last academic year teachers travelled to Banjul at their own expense to collect late payments. Last month, the teachers spoke of receiving their pay from the closest town situated on the main road (9km away). The school has one bicycle, so most of the teachers walked there after closing the school early to ensure they did not miss the paymaster, only to find that the paymaster did not arrive till after dark. Some ended up staying away from home that night as they did not feel comfortable walking back through the bush late at night.

Unfortunately, the teachers feel they have no support to turn to. The problems have been highlighted at the regional level but the teachers stated, "they are not taking care of us".

When asked which three things would help them to teach better, all teachers at the school stated timely payment as one of their key improvements.

As salary levels are not sufficient for teachers to be able to make savings, timely payment is an issue of great concern. When salary payments are late, teachers have to borrow and arrange credit to be able to cover their basic living costs. This has further impacts on how teachers are perceived within their compounds and the wider community. Not only were there region-wide issues of late payment, but teachers in certain schools felt the location of their school further hindered timely payment. Information on when and where the paymaster would make payment was at times lacking, confusing or incorrect. At one school, teachers even spoke of travelling to Banjul, at their own expense (such a journey would cost at least 150 Dalasis return) to receive their payment. Clearly, teachers having to travel from their schools to receive their payment affects education delivery, as the teachers are not there to deliver it, and if information supplied to the teachers is incorrect, then this increases their time spent away from school and the classroom. Disruption to plans caused by late payment further discouraged teachers, for example, plans to visit family may have to be abandoned.

Issues of late payment went beyond monthly payment issues. Some teachers interviewed in November had not received any payment since the beginning of that academic year. This was particularly an issue for newly qualified teachers and unqualified teachers (who are only contracted for the academic year and are in effect given a new contract at the beginning of each academic year). As noted above, for teachers who have moved to a new community, there often has to be a reliance on the kindness, or at least tolerance, of strangers for teachers to be able to meet their basic needs. Teachers spoke of how such treatment impacted on their feelings of value and on how they were perceived by others within the system. Many teachers were similarly affected by late payment of allowances.

Many head teachers explained that they try to motivate their teachers by offering them a loan from the school fund when payments are late. As this was a strategy used by many head teachers, it indicates the scale at which issues of late payment are affecting teachers.

Lack of privacy in relation to salary payments was another issue for some teachers: **“The day you receive your salary everybody knows it”** (female teacher). In addition radio, announcements about 1 by 6 (a soft loan scheme for civil servants to receive one month’s salary in time for the Muslim festival of Tobaski, to be paid back over six months) added to a sense of lack of privacy and suggested to some a lack of dignity. This issue did not affect all teachers in the same way, as some appreciated when information was available, whatever manner this information was delivered in.

MATERNITY LEAVE

Female teachers complained that the current terms for maternity leave were too short and inflexible. The strict nature of splitting the three months’ leave to before and after the delivery of their baby meant it was not possible for teachers to take longer than six weeks’ leave after the birth. For teachers posted away from their extended family, this was particularly an issue. Whereas under cultural norms, extended family would be heavily involved in all aspects of child rearing, for teachers in new communities, this support would not be possible. As a result female teachers at times have to resort to taking their young babies to the classroom with them. This is particularly the case for unqualified teachers, who receive no official maternity leave. One UQT outlined that without seeking special dispensation it would be likely that one week after delivery of her baby, the head teacher would be expecting her back in the classroom.

2.2 TRAINING AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

THE POLICY CONTEXT:

PRE-SERVICE TRAINING

Pre-service training is provided at the Gambia College. The qualification for teaching within the Basic Education system is the Primary Teachers Certificate (PTC). This course involves three years’ training, one year based at college and two years in teaching practice with ‘face-to-face’ (when students return to college for direct instruction) during school holidays. Entry to the course is based on examination and is open to recent school leavers, as well as those already practicing as UQTs. The pre-service course is provided free but only has the capacity to train 350 teachers per year. Between 6,700 and 8,400 extra teachers are required to meet the demands of free basic education for all children, so the capacity at Gambia College is not currently sufficient to meet global goals by 2015.

In the past, initiatives such as the RIFT (Remedial Initiative for Female Teachers) had existed to improve the opportunities for female unqualified teachers to gain access to the college. However, funding for this had a set term and there is no longer any accessing course available. Complaints have, at times, been voiced about the standard of entrants to the College. However, at present, there are no immediate plans to reinstate an upgrading course for entry into Gambia College.

A PTC extension programme is currently being undertaken in Region 5. This extension programme aims to train all unqualified teachers in the region over a three-year period, while the teachers remain in service. The programme is being sponsored by Basic Education Support for Poverty Reduction (BESPOR), a DFID-funded project that is piloting Whole School Development as well as involvement in teacher training. It aims to secure further funding to move to more regions, and in doing so, greatly increasing the number of qualified teachers the system can produce and eliminating the reliance on unqualified teachers.

Management training for head teachers is a new development in The Gambia and is now being provided at the University of The Gambia. Currently, the course has capacity for around 20 head teachers in its first year, the outcome of which will influence the programme's future development.

IN-SERVICE TRAINING

Traditionally, in-service training has been coordinated by the In-service Teacher Training (INSETT) unit, part of the DoSBSE. As roles are evolving and training delivery is being decentralised, INSETT is now focusing on issues of pedagogical training, while the Human Resource Directorate is coordinating moves for training to meet the skill needs and demands and build the capacity of teachers.

Since the introduction of the cluster monitor system, a greater emphasis has been put on training at the cluster and regional levels. Cluster-based workshops have been another form of in-service training available to teachers. These vary between areas and it is difficult to place a benchmark on the frequency with which such trainings are conducted.

School-based workshops are greatly encouraged as a form of team building and shared learning. Conducting such workshops is the responsibility of the school management and therefore varies greatly between schools.

PROMOTION

The Personnel Management Office (PMO) and the Public Service Commission (PSC) are responsible for all civil service vacancies, recruitment and promotions, although it is up to the relevant sector to initiate the process. Steps are taken between the sector, the PMO and the PSC to advertise, shortlist and interview for vacant positions. Due to the nature of this bureaucratic system and the numbers of teachers employed, promotions can be a slow process. Within the education sector, the Human Resources Directorate acts as the liaison with the PMO.

THE REALITY:

PRE-SERVICE TRAINING

Teachers appreciated receiving training and in particular those who had spent time as unqualified teachers noted the benefit of receiving training. **"Since receiving training at the college there is a very big difference compared to the time spent as a UQT. Now I know how to organise daily planning, use teaching aids"** (newly qualified teacher). Another teacher trainee on the PTC-extension programme stated: **"The present training has motivated me a lot; I am impressed with the different skills brought to me"**.

However, some teachers and officials with the Gambia College felt the PTC was being used as a "stepping stone" for individuals to receive training and then move to other professions. Following completion of the PTC, many qualified teachers choose not to stay within the profession, or only take up postings until "something better comes along".

Others felt life as a trainee was made difficult by the conditions they had to serve under. As noted later in this chapter, the work load of trainees can be very heavy, and while they are serving in the same difficult conditions as other teachers, they have to manage on a much smaller stipend. This can lead to trainees returning from teaching practice feeling demotivated before they even enter the teaching service proper.

Of the trainees interviewed, motivation levels varied. Some had very high motivation levels, in particular, some of the trainees involved in the Region 5 extension programme. However, overall 46 per cent of the teacher trainees involved in the research would still rate their motivation levels as low or very low. This is a worrying statistic as there is a general belief that this is a time when a teacher would be feeling more motivated, having just chosen to enter the profession and receiving training and opportunities for self-development.

For those who had not received pre-service training, there was a great desire for this: **“The government should try their level best to help us become qualified teachers”** (female UQT).

IN-SERVICE TRAINING

One of the most common ways through which head teachers stated they motivated teachers was by running school-based workshops. Where in-service training was available, teachers felt motivated and positive about it. Most often, such training is taking place at a school or cluster level, frequently with the support of NGOs. Cluster workshops were further highlighted as a benefit: **“You are gaining more knowledge”** (female QT). Teachers also spoke positively of previous training programmes that had taken place in the past during summer holidays, but were disappointed that these were stopped several years ago and there does not appear to be plans for their reintroduction.

However, the majority of teachers spoke of a lack of in-service training, or further development opportunities. Teachers complained that following their PTC course, there was a lack of in-service training. Many stated they had not received any further training since attending Gambia College. Teachers did not feel supported to attend external training or courses to develop themselves professionally. As the Human Resource Directorate continues to work on its appraisal system, it is intended that this will provide much-needed information on training needs and gaps of teachers. The aim of this is to deliver a more comprehensive system of in-service training to the teachers in the classrooms.

Head teachers spoke of **“learning from one another on the job,”** as there were no other opportunities for head teachers to receive training on management issues. In some regions, head teachers are called together to share ideas and experience, but as yet this appears to be all that is offered to head teachers in the way of professional development. None of the head teachers who shared their views in the research had received specific management training and it appeared that promotions were based on length of service rather than merit and performance. It must, however, be noted that during the final stages of this data collection, the DoSE entered into an agreement with the University of The Gambia to provide management training to head teachers. As mentioned earlier, this training currently has capacity for about 20 head teachers and it will be interesting to monitor how this progresses and if it reaches out to a larger group in the future.

PROMOTION

“Here promotion is a problem” (male head teacher, rural school).

Teachers were demotivated by the lack of promotions. Some teachers felt, as with postings, that promotions were being conducted in an unfair manner. **“They have their own people,”** or **“You must have someone to be vocal for you,”** were common complaints. Information about promotions was slow to reach teachers, especially in the provinces, and this compounded the problems in the promotion procedures.

One education official felt the problems lay with the procedures at the Public Service Commission, stating, **“Teachers make up about 60 per cent [of public sector employees] but they are not giving teachers 60 per cent of their time”**.

Many teachers in senior positions only held these positions on an acting basis. Of the 25 management teachers involved in the research, seven were in acting positions. The case study below outlines one such teacher's career path.

ALWAYS ACTING

A male head teacher in a rural area of The Gambia, classified as a hardship area, has been working for 16 years without any promotion. He is the acting head teacher of the school and for this he receives no acting allowance or training to fulfil the role. He feels there is a lack of information coming from DoSBSE regarding promotions and that decisions are made in Banjul before the information reaches those in the provinces. If the situation continues in this manner, he feels that he would prefer to leave the profession to seek greener pastures, although originally he had intended to make teaching his lifetime career.

Education officials were clear that funds for payment of substantive position holders are available; in fact, they stated that money from the teacher wage budget often has to be returned to the Treasury due to positions being unfilled and therefore not paid. DoSBSE states that the slow rate of promotion is currently due to the inefficient systems in place within the Public Service Commission and the Personnel Management Office. In response, the PMO finds the education sector differs from the other sectors due to the large numbers involved and the small capacity of the PSC to meet these demands. It was, however, felt that claims that promotions could take over one year to process should not be the case if procedures are running to plan. One head teacher commented, **"I've been in an acting position for the last two years and there is no acting allowance, which is very discouraging"**. She went on to comment on the lack of information on how this situation is likely to progress.

2.3 TEACHER DISTRIBUTION

THE POLICY CONTEXT:

POSTINGS

DoSBSE is currently guided by policy guidelines, which place a timeframe upon postings to certain regions. In theory, teachers are posted to a region for five years; following this time, they can make a request for their situation to be reviewed. When posted to a school, they should be based at that school for a minimum of three years.

However, awareness and adherence to these guidelines is variable (both positively and negatively). National postings are agreed between the Human Resources Directorate and Regional Directorates to try and ensure equitable distribution of qualified teachers across the country. Following this, decisions are made at regional level for the specific posting of teachers. Teachers are notified of their posting through notice boards at headquarters, GTU offices and at regional level. Several weeks into the first term, a stabilisation exercise is conducted within the regions to determine teacher levels in schools and at this time, further transfers can be made to ensure schools have adequate numbers of teachers.

DoSBSE has committed itself to the provision of transport for teachers going on postings to the regions. This transport is provided in the form of a bus at the beginning and end of each academic year.

TEACHER SHORTAGE AND WORKLOAD

There are not currently enough qualified teachers within the country to meet the demands of Education for All and current school enrolments. Consequently, schools rely on the use of unqualified, untrained teachers. Teacher trainees are also relied upon to teach full classes while on their second and third years of training.

There is currently a total of 4,479 teachers,¹² of whom 2,912 (65 per cent) are qualified/trained classroom teachers, with a further 498 qualified Koranic teachers and 1,873 untrained teachers and teacher trainees serving in the academic year 2004–5. Of these, a greater percentage of UQTs can be seen in the rural areas, in particular Regions 4, 5, and 6, with Region 5 having the highest rate of UQTs at 56.2 per cent. (It is important to note that this data is taken from academic year 2004–5 and that a current PTC extension programme is targeting the majority of teachers previously classed as UQTs in Region 5 – this extension was embarked upon in 2006.). For a full breakdown of teacher numbers, see Table 1. The Gambia requires between 6,700 and

12 Statistics from Department of State for Education, Education Management Information System, academic year 2004–2005.

8,400 new teachers¹³ to reach internationally recognised goals by 2015, that is, more than double, or with high attrition rates almost triple, the current teacher levels.

With increasing enrolments, pupil–teacher ratios have been targeted at 45:1 across the country. Due to a lack of classroom space, and to some extent, teachers, a double shift system is in operation in many schools. There are now moves to discourage and reduce the number of teachers working on the double shift system.

THE REALITY:

POSTINGS

“The inability of DoSE to implement a Postings Policy is making us lose teachers in the upper regions (rural area)” (GTU representative).

Teacher postings were an issue of concern to some teachers. However, the primary issue for teachers regarding postings related to the next chapter of this report, Teachers’ Voice and Professional Relationships, with teachers fearing they would be forgotten or skipped over by the relevant authorities while on rural postings. Often teachers did not know how long their particular posting would last, which further compounded this issue.

Although DoSBSE states it is working towards a Postings Policy, few of the teachers involved in the research seemed to be aware of this. In fact, the GTU is campaigning for the implementation of a Postings Policy. Teachers who were aware of the policy felt it was not always abided by and complained of a lack of voice and choice in the postings process. It is important to recognise that teachers find postings away from their family difficult. A female teacher stated that as she was missing her family while on placement, **“I was there working but I could not concentrate”**. This adds to the importance of ensuring teachers are posted according to well-known and fair guidelines so that appropriate family arrangements can be made.

It was felt, and stated at different levels within the system, that influence over postings could be made through personal relationships: **“Those who have relatives in the office are always in urban areas ... they choose where they want to go”** (male teacher, Upper Basic School). One education official noted that although guidelines place a three-year school term and a five-year regional term, there is often “external pressures for teachers to be transferred prematurely”.

Whether this is truly the case or not, it is a dangerous view and an important one to dispel to ensure teachers feel they are being treated equally. The lack of information teachers feel they have about postings issues and the effect they feel individual reports on them can have, influences how secure they feel within their post. One teacher stated, **“Reports can be made against a person and they will be moved immediately”**. Decisions appear to be made arbitrarily, rather than on the basis of a fair and transparent appraisal system, and teachers lack awareness of any appeals procedure to allow them to dispute the decisions. The feeling was expressed that, at times, **“teachers suffer as a result of politics”** within postings issues.

Teachers recognised that certain regions were understaffed and that it was their ‘duty’ to provide education across the country. However, with the current differences in standards and the perceived inequity in the system of postings, one senior teacher stated, **“some teachers refuse to take rural postings and move to the private sector instead”**.

Teachers felt the mode of transport was demotivating and degrading. Not only did they feel the bus provided was overcrowded, but it gave them no opportunity to transport furniture or other household goods. One teacher felt the need to state, **“We are not bags to be loaded and dumped anywhere”**. Transport of furniture is another part of this issue for teachers, especially if postings are changed regularly: a teacher cannot afford to replace their furniture on each placement, but the expense of transporting furniture is also an issue. One head teacher spoke of sleeping on a mattress on the floor for a couple of years before being able to organise transport for her furniture.

FEMALE TEACHERS AND POSTINGS

More positively, in cases where teachers were able to request a change in their posting, it was often to assist female teachers on marital grounds. The issue of female teachers’ postings in

13 Department of State for Education, *Education Sector Strategic Plan 2006–2015*, September 2006; UNESCO Institute of Statistics, *Teachers and Educational Quality: Monitoring Global Needs for 2015*, April 2006.

rural areas is an area of concern. With a severe lack of female teachers (let alone qualified female teachers) in these areas, headway on girls' education is being hampered. Research conducted by the GTU Women's Wing highlights several of the problems that emerged in this research as affecting all teachers, as having a particular impact on female teachers in rural areas, and on the willingness of female teachers to accept rural postings. For example, accommodation can have a major effect on female teachers' postings. (This will be looked at in more detail under the section on school facilities.) In addition, teachers posted away from their families and, at times, in isolated positions may have the added difficulty of dealing with sexual harassment and inappropriate conduct. Coupled with family duties and responsibilities, this makes postings an even more sensitive issue for female teachers.

TEACHER SHORTAGE AND WORKLOAD

"The answer to our quality problem mainly lies in the distribution of qualified teachers" (GTU representative).

Several schools visited over the course of the research were understaffed. Not only did schools rely on the use of unqualified teachers, but teachers also had to cover more than one class and head teachers often spent significant amounts of time in the classroom. This reduced the amount of time they were able to spend on teacher management and support, thus further impacting on teacher motivation. These shortages were felt across the country in both urban and rural areas. However, the effect was more acutely felt in the rural areas where, as can be seen in Table 1, dependence on UQTs is higher. Even so, in one Class C urban school, teachers spoke of only just receiving the quota of teachers in the second term and another school was still short of two teachers. They also spoke of large class sizes with around 50 pupils in their classes.

At times, the problem related to teachers not reporting to their posted school. The issues of teacher shortage particularly affected management teachers, as covering classes increased their workload and it was their responsibility to liaise and work with regional authorities to try and ensure the situation was resolved. One deputy head teacher stated that in his three years at the school in question, this was the first year that all six teaching positions had been filled, and of these six, only two of the positions were filled with trained teachers (the head and deputy head teacher). Among the six teachers, there was one female teacher and one Koranic teacher, and none of the teachers originally came from the community; all of them had moved there to accept the posting. Another rural school was operating with four classroom teachers, including the head teacher, and one Koranic teacher, serving a total of 230 students. Of these, only two of the teachers were qualified. The head teacher noted that the school remained short of three teachers, and a couple of the teachers had to cover two classes at the same time.

TEACHER TRAINEES

Due to the reliance on unqualified teachers in the system, when trainees are sent on teaching practice, they are often placed in charge of a full class and have a workload the same as that of other teachers within the school. In addition to this, they have course work to complete. In theory, when trainees are out for their second- and third-year practice, they should be attached to a qualified teacher and have a reduced number of lessons to teach. In practice, it is recognised by all that with the current teacher levels this is not possible and is not happening.

2.4 TEACHERS' VOICE AND PROFESSIONAL RELATIONSHIPS

THE POLICY CONTEXT:

COMMUNICATION AND TRANSPORT

Physical communication in many parts of The Gambia is problematic. Roads, transport and general infrastructure make travel from rural areas difficult and time consuming. Mobile telephone networks and telephone coverage are variable and unreliable. As such, communication relies on personal and professional networks and, for teachers, places greater importance on how professional relationships are conducted and managed.

SCHOOL RELATIONSHIPS

Relations between school managers and teachers cannot be over generalised, as effective management and administration of schools vary from school to school. Management teachers (head teachers, deputy teachers and senior teachers) usually do not receive specific training or instruction on school management and, in particular, on managing other people.

At present, a training course has been initiated at the University of The Gambia in school management for head teachers. BESPOR is currently piloting the Whole School Development model in Region 5, which is looking holistically at school management and the relations involved in this. Work includes the development of a head teacher's manual and facilitation training on how this should be used. It is hoped that through such methods of school development there can be greater openness and involvement of all teachers in decision-making processes, and a positive knock-on effect on how relationships within schools are conducted. These developments may assist in producing a greater uniformity in how schools are run and it is hoped they will allow for greater openness within school management.

REGIONAL RELATIONSHIPS

A decentralised system of management is in place within the education system. Regional Directorates in each of the six regions across the country are responsible for the planning and implementation of education programmes in their respective regions. The Regional Education Directorate (RED) has responsibility for teacher distribution, teaching and learning materials (TLMs) distribution, training needs and the flexible calendar, among other elements. If a school is requiring assistance then it should first be dealt with at the regional level.

The RED is headed by a regional director and other officials, such as a training officer, take responsibility for certain issues across the region. New additions to the RED teams are the cluster monitors. As part of a scheme initiated in 2005, the cluster monitors are responsible for monitoring and supervising a cluster of between eight and thirteen schools within each region. There are clear guidelines on how cluster monitors should function to ensure efficient communication and contact with schools, and to provide additional external professional support and supervision to teachers.

CENTRAL RELATIONSHIPS

As most issues concerning school affairs should be dealt with at the regional level, relationships between teachers and the central administration should not require such regular contact. However, communication of issues such as promotion, training, policy development, as well as overall review of policy implementation between central and regional levels is ongoing, with an expected trickle-down effect to the teachers in schools. This communication should equip teachers with the information and knowledge required to conduct their work and to ensure teachers have the opportunity to develop professionally. Gaining information in a timely fashion is a crucial element to teachers feeling valued and taken into consideration by the relevant authorities.

TEACHERS' VOICE

In addition to regular communication, teachers have the opportunity to be heard through The Gambia Teachers' Union (GTU). The GTU is the only teachers' union in the country and represents almost all teachers within the conventional school system (notably, teachers from the Madrasa school system are not members of the GTU). The GTU is regularly represented on education committees and is well accepted and involved within the education system.

Consultations may be held to gain the views of teachers on particular issues. For example, the most recent education policy was developed in consultation with both the GTU and teachers directly through regional workshops.

THE REALITY:

"Managers at each level should, first and foremost, be able to provide some form of support to the teachers; that way they feel like they belong to the teaching fraternity" (Permanent Secretary for Education).

COMMUNICATION AND TRANSPORT

For teachers posted to rural areas, one of the greatest concerns they had related to communication. For both professional and personal reasons, teachers found communication a problem. A majority of schools in rural areas had no land phone, and dependence on mobile phone networks, which are unreliable, are viewed as a poor alternative. This causes regular professional problems, with the example being given of unqualified teachers who were unable to receive information of their forthcoming interview at the Gambia College: **“Because of the problem with communication, this is why they were late to get into the College”** (deputy head).

For personal reasons, teachers found postings in remote areas demotivating, as it limited their contact with family and friends. One head teacher told of missing his newborn child’s naming ceremony due to difficulties in communication of his child’s birth reaching him and difficulties in transport from his posting.

These are two very individual examples of how communication problems are impacting on teachers. But these examples are not exceptional in their nature, and they highlight an issue that came out of every focus group discussion held in rural areas. Teachers felt cut off and left out. This impacts on their feelings of value and their willingness to continue in the profession. These communication issues go on to affect their professional relationships at each level.

Transport proved a difficulty for teachers in both urban and rural areas. In rural areas, transport from schools to other areas could often only be done very early, with vehicles leaving at four or five o’clock each morning and returning in the evening. Other schools were situated further off the main road and teachers would either have to walk several kilometres to where they could pick up a vehicle or would have to hire a donkey cart. Schools within the hardship areas had received bicycles through FTI funding, and while some teachers appreciated this, others felt it was unsatisfactory to meet the needs of the school. One teacher complained that **“a bicycle is not good; only one teacher can use it and if you are sick you cannot use a bicycle”**. Credit was however given, by other teachers, to the fact that a bicycle was better than nothing.

SCHOOL RELATIONSHIPS

“It is we, the heads’, approach which is important ... we have to treat the teachers with respect” (head teacher, urban area).

Some head teachers recognised the importance of management styles in creating good relationships with teachers and in turn the smooth running of the school. Acknowledgement was given by some head teachers of the need to **“show appreciation of teachers”**. As none of the head teachers interviewed had received specific management training, personal styles influenced how schools were run and varied greatly.

Senior teachers in larger schools often worked with other teachers in the provision of support and supervision to their colleagues. Planning was often conducted at grade level, coordinated by a senior teacher in each grade. Some felt this led to a heavy workload on senior teachers who were conducting supervisions on top of all their regular class duties.

However, not all examples were positive. Less experienced teachers at times felt they were looked down upon by more senior teachers and that decisions and information were only shared among senior teachers, to the exclusion of others. Education officials admitted that not all school managers realise the **“importance of supporting teachers”** and felt there was a need to focus on how improvements could be made in this area.

REGIONAL RELATIONSHIPS

Many teachers felt the cluster monitor system was encouraging: **“It is a big relief”** (head teacher, rural area). They commented on an increase in the number of visits, and the fact that communication between the RED and the school could be relayed through the cluster monitor. It was noted in the past that such communication was more challenging, as it would require the head teacher to travel personally to the RED. Not only did teachers note the benefit of improved communication but they also appreciated the additional support and supervision provided to teachers.

However, although most teachers agreed the situation had improved, some still felt there was a lack of information available to teachers and schools. Teachers complained of hearing of the end of term one week before schools were due to close, and the impact this then had on their assessment of pupils for the end of term. Others felt communication was not necessarily the biggest issue, but rather the deeper issue that they felt their views were not being listened to, or taken into account at the regional level. One teacher commented: **“They are not taking care of us, but every time they come here they want to see our lesson plans; when we have a problem they are not willing to help”**.

Others felt the concentration on looking at teacher records meant classroom style and experience were being overlooked by those involved in the inspection process. School problems often existed particularly in relation to late payment, school facilities and maintenance. At one school, the water pump had been broken for two years: **“Master was writing, writing, writing, but still nothing”**. Head teachers noted the importance of the relationship with the REDs to be able to operate effectively within the schools. In certain regions, head teachers were brought together for information sharing and further training, and they felt this assisted them in being efficient managers.

As with the school-level management, styles vary across the regions. This can affect how teachers view their relationship with the regional office and in turn how valued they feel as ‘part of the education team’. Some regions felt directors were not aware of what was happening at school level and that it was important the **“directors be realistic”** (deputy head teacher) to ensure they see the true picture of what is happening in the schools. Even the manner in which cluster monitors are used can vary between the regions, therefore their impact varies widely.

CENTRAL RELATIONSHIPS

For most teachers, the issues they had were dealt with at the school and regional levels. However, certain issues such as finance and promotion tended to be dealt with through communication with DoSBSE headquarters. Some teachers found that if they did not get a desirable response at the regional level, they would have to take the issue further; this was particularly the case on issues relating to payment and late payment.

Problems teachers faced relating to lack of information regarding promotions and the impact this had on the value and concern they felt others had for them are dealt with under previous sections.

TEACHERS’ VOICE

While teachers generally felt the GTU was representing them, some had not heard of the processes of consultation that had taken place at policy and decision-making levels. These teachers felt they were just informed of changes and had to implement them, when they pointed out the fact that **“if we fail here, it means up there have failed”**. However, it can be seen that procedures for consultation on the most recent policy did take place within all the regional authorities, which suggests the problem is related to sharing information at school level to ensure teachers become aware of the workshops taking place, most likely involving senior teachers. The regional offices may also have to take some responsibility for ensuring this information reaches the teachers.

2.5 SCHOOL FACILITIES

THE POLICY CONTEXT:

CARE AND MAINTENANCE OF SCHOOL BUILDINGS

School construction across the country has taken place at a variety of different times, with involvement and funding from a variety of different stakeholders. It is the role of the Planning Directorate to use information supplied to it to ensure an efficient and effective system of maintenance of school buildings. The Planning Directorate uses information supplied from regional and school surveys to assess the needs for maintenance and plan budget spending.

Over the last few years, concentration of donor funding has been on the construction of new school buildings, to meet the demand of increasing school enrolments. However, while concentration of donor funding has been on construction, government funding has been allocated to maintenance. The recurrent spending budget has varied with the economy and funding gaps have been highlighted as part of the recently produced *Education Sector Strategic Plan 2006–2015*.

Several initiatives have been undertaken in the country to ensure the construction of appropriate toilet facilities for boys and girls. Maintenance of these facilities again falls under that of school buildings.

Each school should have access to clean and safe drinking water, although maintenance of such provisions can be an issue.

Education policy clearly sets out the standard requirements for classroom size to accommodate pupil numbers. In addition to this, minimum furniture standards are set by DoSBSE to ensure classes can accommodate children up to the recommended ratios set out in policy.

TEACHING AND LEARNING MATERIALS

Teaching and learning materials (TLMs) are supplied to schools through the RED, which receives provisions from DoSBSE. With funding from the FTI, there has been a greater number of resources available for the provision of TLMs. New textbooks, along with teachers' guides, have been provided to all schools for Grades 1–4. Materials for producing teaching aids, markers and chalk are available in schools. FTI funding has also enabled provision of further technical resources, such as photocopier and computer facilities, to REDs to assist in their management.

Exercise books and pens are not supplied to students and this can be seen as an inhibiting factor, particularly for students from very poor backgrounds, for whom any additional costs to education make attendance and retention a difficulty. Likewise, teachers are not supplied with planning books and other materials to ease their completion of duties.

LIVING CONDITIONS

"The circumstances in which teachers find themselves are crucial to their performance" DoSE 2004.¹⁴

As teachers' postings often involve their relocation to a new area, the personal situation of teachers and the living conditions they are moved to has an important impact on how teachers perceive their posting, their willingness to stay in the profession and their levels of motivation. This is particularly the case for those posted to remote rural locations, which are, perhaps, very different from the conditions they are accustomed to. Teachers in rural areas are provided with a housing allowance of 60 Dalasis to assist them with renting property in the local community.

DoSBSE currently recognises the importance of accommodation issues for teachers and has committed funds from FTI, the African Development Bank, the Arab Bank and the International Development Association/World Bank to build staff quarters. However, the task remains huge and, as can be seen below, significantly affects how teachers feel within their profession.

THE REALITY:

CARE AND MAINTENANCE OF SCHOOL BUILDINGS

The conditions of school buildings and their levels of care and maintenance varied greatly between schools, depending on their location. The case study below provides a comparative look at two different school environments.

14 Department of State for Education, *Education Policy 2004–2015*, May 2004, p.49.

THE URBAN–RURAL DIVIDE

Conditions in schools vary greatly across the country, with the biggest divide being between those situated in urban areas and those in more remote rural locations.

School A is in a rural area, qualifying for the relatively new hardship allowance. The school consists of two classroom blocks, however, only one of the structures is in use, as storms had taken the roof off one building and it has fallen into a state of disrepair. A double shift system is operating for this reason. The classrooms that are in use are in poor condition, with damaged concrete flooring and walls.

The school staff consists of five male teachers, one of whom was a UQT from the local community; the remaining four moved to the area for their posting. Accommodation is a difficulty for the teachers, with the head teacher remarking, “I’m sharing a room with two of my teachers, one room”. The school has no water supply, no fencing and in turn could not operate a school garden. These factors are compounded by a lack of acceptance of mainstream education systems, and therefore the teachers in this profession, within the local community.

The key response from all teachers at the school to the issues that were demotivating them was related to the physical working and living conditions they were dealing with on a daily basis.

School B is situated in an urban area and is a much larger school with over 50 teachers, of which almost 50 per cent are female. The school has well-maintained buildings and classrooms, with teachers able to use their spaces to display teaching aids. The school is walled and has a pleasant playground area. Teachers interviewed at this school lived in their own rented accommodation with their families.

Issues of demotivation for teachers at this school centred on external factors, such as local transportation systems, and lack of financial incentives within the teaching profession.

These variations exist as different actors are involved in the construction of schools and in some cases schools apply to external sources to assist with school maintenance. For example, one of the schools involved in this research had applied to the VSO Small Project Fund for assistance in maintenance of school toilets, which were no longer able to be used as the pit latrines had fallen in. After being informed at the RED that the funds would not be forthcoming in the near future, the school had no option but to look outside the education sector. One education official admitted the concentration on school construction meant “**for a long time we have not been looking at maintenance and rehabilitation**”. It can be seen that the current budget does not meet the demands of maintenance funding.

Teachers spoke of the impact of poor classroom facilities on their daily lives in the classroom. They felt the environment, at times, was neither conducive for teaching or learning. They commented on dark, dusty, poorly ventilated classrooms. In some classes, the blackboard was in such a poor condition it could not be used. In other schools, building space was lacking. As is exemplified in the case study above, entire classroom blocks can become unusable if maintenance is not routinely carried out and storm damage punctually dealt with. One school shared its buildings with the Upper Basic School in the afternoon and this impacted on condition and use of furniture. Of the schools visited, clear differences in conditions and standards of buildings were seen and this often impacted on the numbers of teaching aids and materials in use around the classroom. Those schools in a poorer condition were much less likely to be using teaching aids and wall displays, perhaps due to the difficulty in maintaining such aids or an indication of the willingness of teachers to work on such materials when constantly dealing with more difficult conditions.

In some schools, teachers complained that classrooms were not secure and as such it was difficult for them to leave displays or materials within the classroom, as they may be removed by the next day. Lack of classroom security impacted on one teacher trainee when arriving at school on the day of her inspection to find her classroom was covered with goat faeces; she

had to deal with this herself to ensure a clean classroom before the children and the college inspectors arrived.

Of the schools visited, three had no water supply at all; a further three had insufficient or inappropriate water supply. As a necessity for basic sanitation, this was a significant issue for schools and teachers. It impacted on lessons and contact hours as children regularly had to leave school to fetch water. In turn, this affected the teachers' planning and lesson delivery. Two of the schools visited had no toilet facilities for boys or girls, as previous pit latrine toilets had fallen in and no funds for maintenance had been provided. Other schools complained of inadequate toilet facilities for the size of the school.

Teachers spoke of a lack of furniture – at times, three children had to share one bench – and the difficulties this gave children in being able to write assignments in class. Another head teacher spoke of a nursery class of 73 children in one classroom without any furniture. As a policy commitment, the DoSBSE has decided to annex nursery classes to Lower Basic Schools, and this is particularly the case in rural areas where early childhood education services are not readily available. However, resources and facilities for these classes have had to be found at school level, leading to situations as outlined above of overcrowding and lack of provisions.

TEACHING AND LEARNING MATERIALS

"FTI has raised the levels of motivation of teachers" (education official).

Most teachers noted an improved situation regarding teaching and learning materials and this assisted and encouraged them in their work in the classroom. New textbooks and teachers' guides had been supplied to all the schools visited, as had supplies of materials (although there was slight regional variation in exact supplies) that increased teachers' ability to produce teaching aids and other materials. As a result of these improvements, the issue of TLMs did not feature as highly in focus group discussions as other issues. However, when teachers were asked which three things would help them to be a better teacher, TLMs were regularly listed (74 teachers). The areas teachers found to be lacking were particularly for practical subjects, the sciences, arts and crafts, and Koranic teachers noted a lack of materials for them to work with.

One head teacher noted the importance of appropriate levels of TLMs: **"Where there is enough of what they need, most of the time they deliver their best,"** and another stated, **"You cannot teach effectively without TLMs"**.

LIVING CONDITIONS

"I'm sharing a room with two of my teachers, one room" (head teacher, rural school).

Overcrowding and poor conditions of accommodation were the most common problem for teachers in relation to their living conditions. When posted to a new community, teachers commonly had to find their own accommodation. Positive examples were given when other teachers were members of the local community and were able to facilitate the process of arranging accommodation to rent. However, there was often nobody to assist the teachers. Several teachers spoke of sharing accommodation with senior staff until they were able to organise more long-term accommodation. **"When I first arrived here it was a problem: I was staying one month with the head teacher before I could get my own house"** (male teacher).

Very few schools visited had staff quarters; those that did often only accommodated the head teacher; others were of very poor condition with teachers complaining that during rainy season their conditions became even more difficult. At one school, teachers spoke of moving into a disused classroom during the rains. Another spoke of their roof falling in and lack of toilet facilities at their accommodation. Only one out of the 24 schools visited had staff quarters that the teachers found comfortable and a good housing facility. This was one of the few schools that did not highlight the issue of accommodation and living conditions as a demotivating factor. The impact of poor accommodation on classroom teaching was noted by many teachers. The issues ranged from lateness, impacting on school contact hours and lack of a suitable environment for planning and lesson preparation, to the more fundamental comment: **"If you don't sleep well then when you go to the classroom you do not perform well"**. Another teacher

noted the impact of a leaking house: **“I would have to go to the office in the morning with a heavy head, and would need to take time off during the day”**.

As noted earlier, issues such as accommodation can have a more profound effect on whether or not a female teacher is able to accept a rural posting and live comfortably and safely there. One deputy head teacher commented on her experiences when posted to a rural location, having to find her own accommodation; about her first posting she said, **“I was given a room without a door”**. A GTU representative spoke of visiting teachers accommodation: **“As I looked up I saw the stars,”** and she reported a case where a female teacher was expected to share with the alkali's (local chief's) wives, and would rotate beds to whichever wife was not on “marital duties”. Clearly, there is a serious lack of dignity in such living arrangements. Appropriate living conditions are the first step to female teachers feeling safe and secure in their posting. A deputy head teacher gave positive examples of how changes had been made to teachers' living conditions through teachers and the community working together to construct good quality staff quarters, and of a solar panel project conducted by the GTU Credit Union, which was used to improve facilities in remote areas.

2.6 STATUS AND VALUE

THE POLICY CONTEXT:

LACK OF RESPECT

This issue relates directly to teachers' perceived place in society and their feelings towards this. Issues relating to the respect teachers receive are outlined through the reality on the ground that teachers commented on. Policy recognises the importance of teachers and the need for teachers to be well motivated and supported to be able to carry out their role effectively. Policy does not make any specific statements on mechanisms to engender respect among teachers. However, through its outline to improve conditions and in taking into account the welfare and development of teachers, steps are being made to create a situation in which the teaching profession is looked upon more favourably.

PARENTAL ATTITUDES AND STUDENT BEHAVIOUR

Systems for community and parental involvement in school life exist through Parent-Teacher Associations and School Management Committees. Parents are encouraged to be part of school life. A PTA constitution is currently under development, however, until this is put in place, as with many of the other factors affecting school management, the involvement of the PTA, and parents in general, varies greatly.

Education directives are now steering teachers away from the use of corporal punishment as a method of student discipline. A Guidance and Counselling Unit has been established in the DoSBSE, with responsibilities to share with teachers alternative methods of discipline and classroom management. In addition, groups have formed within The Gambia to raise awareness of child rights issues.

COMMUNITY RELATIONS

The Gambia is an ethnically diverse country with five major ethnic groups living together. Distribution of ethnic groups varies across the country, and in rural areas, insular communities may exist. Views of 'Western' or 'conventional' education vary, particularly within rural communities, some of which can be hostile to the ideas brought in by strangers, such as the teachers, to the community.

It is well accepted that community relations are an important element of school development. Greater involvement and use of the community is currently being piloted through the Whole School Development project being undertaken in Region 5. Through this method of school development, the community is involved in the decision making of the school and the direction in which the school develops to ensure it fits with the community's values and the community can have a true sense of ownership of the development of the school. Community involvement was also a key element to the development of schools through ActionAid International projects undertaken in the 1980s; evidence from these schools suggested much greater community acceptance of the styles and nature of education, even among ethnic groups that in other areas are hostile to the concepts. As noted by many, at the end of the day, the school belongs to the community; the teachers will move on.

THE REALITY:

LACK OF RESPECT

“Society looks down on them [teachers] because they are considered to be paupers.”¹⁵

Many of the issues discussed in the other sections feed into the way teachers are viewed by society and their perceived status within it. Issues of poor facilities, accommodation, pay levels and time of payment, low levels of training and lack of materials send messages to outsiders that teachers are not being fully valued within the profession, and this has a knock-on effect of how valued they are likely to be within society. As the recent newspaper quote above states, income impacts on the way people are seen in society and where they fit into it. Issues of status were of greater concern to teachers in the urban and rural town areas. One deputy head teacher stated, **“In the past, people saw teachers as good people in society but now they are viewed as poor, having nothing. Nowadays, people only give regard to people with money”**.

Although some teachers thought financial issues were the key to status within society, others felt it was based on other issues and incentives they were faced with. Even though teachers enter the profession on the same or a better salary scale than other civil servants, they are still not viewed in the same light. For example, teachers compared their situation to that of nurses: newly qualified nurses enter the profession on a Grade 6 salary, following their training at Gambia College; this is the same as teachers, although it was felt there is a better perception of nurses in society, that they enjoy a higher status. Of those entering the college with credits in science subjects, the majority are likely to place nursing as their top priority, then public health and finally the higher teaching certificate course (teachers of Upper Basic classes). This highlights perceptions of the choice of teaching as a career path. One male teacher even noted it is **“hard to marry well with these perceptions”**. Other anecdotal evidence heard during the course of this research further highlighted this point and makes clear the fact that teachers’ status in society has an important impact on many areas of their lives.

Teachers spoke of a lack of respect coming from the education authorities and some felt this was shown through the way teachers are treated. For example, when teachers are not given correct or regular information, or they are not consulted about new developments, they feel it is because their views are not valued by those above and they are not respected enough to be considered and kept well informed. As highlighted under the section Teachers’ Voice and Professional Relationships, such pathways flow into schools where junior teachers at times feel they are not treated fairly or respected by their elders.

Teachers felt positively about the scheme for the Best Teacher Award organised by the GTU. This values good service and teachers were motivated by it. One head teacher planned to conduct similar awards at a school level to encourage teachers further and to display to members of the community the achievements of teachers. In addition to this, an education official pointed to the larger example of the Best Teacher Award that takes place in Ghana and felt The Gambia, too, could benefit from a higher profile of teacher awards.

PARENTAL ATTITUDES AND STUDENT BEHAVIOUR

Teachers in several schools felt there was a lack of parental support for the work of teachers and the education of their children. In addition to there sometimes being a lack of support, parents were hostile to methods used in schools and blamed teachers for any problems that existed. Some teachers even felt intimidated by the behaviour of parents and had experienced physical or verbal violence in school. Teachers felt if there were ever a problem in the school, the parents would immediately blame the teacher and come directly to the teacher with the issue. Alternatively, an issue of discouragement for teachers was that some parents showed little interest in their children’s schooling. Some teachers felt, since the phasing out of the Primary Leaving Certificate, there was a laissez-faire attitude among parents and students. This manifested itself in a lack of partnership between teachers and parents, when it was agreed that for a good education the two parties need to work together. However, teachers did recognise the difficulty for parents who were illiterate to be able to assist their children in school work, or to understand the importance of needing extra study time to complete homework following the school day and so sending their children to do farm or house work instead. The knock-on effect of this on students’ participation in class was demotivating for teachers. One teacher commented that when student participation is low, it **“makes you feel like you are failing as a teacher”**.

¹⁵ *Point Newspaper*, Editorial, 14 February 2007.

Student behaviour was a challenge for some teachers, who found it could become demoralising. Teachers in some schools found that new knowledge of the concepts of child rights had led to a wider incidence of unruly behaviour among children. One teacher stated, **“child rights can destroy the children”**. It was acknowledged that the issue often caused problems, as children did not know the true meaning of child rights and there are many misconceptions in existence. Teachers found discipline a problem. Among those who discussed issues of discipline, there was recognition that corporal punishment was no longer to be used, but without it, teachers did not know how to keep discipline within their classes. This point related back to the issue of training and the skills needed to ensure appropriate classroom management. In fact, when some teachers were discussing the issue of training, one of the benefits highlighted was improved skills for classroom management.

Even students recognised that behavioural issues made teaching a difficult profession. Reasons given by students for not wanting to become a teacher included, **“students don’t respect you,”** and **“I don’t want to be insulted and students always insult teachers”**. In addition to poor behaviour, the negative attitudes of children towards school were seen as demoralising. One example of this was the slow return of pupils to school following holidays, which also links back to parental support for education.

COMMUNITY RELATIONS

Direct relations with the community varied between areas and schools. Where relations were good, teachers commented on the positive effect it had on motivation, and the same was true in the reverse. Examples were given of extensive PTA involvement in the activities of some schools, with community and teachers working together, for example, on construction projects such as building staff quarters. Community members involved in the research were often well aware of the problems facing teachers and also highlighted the importance of the involvement and contribution to be part of the community.

However, where community relations were less favourable, several issues could affect teachers, from higher rates of absenteeism and poor enrolment rates to difficulties in finding accommodation and feeling uncomfortable in home surroundings. Within certain communities, it was noted that it was difficult **“to move into this community as an unmarried man”** (male teacher). Suspicion of motives and intentions of teachers coming into communities and perception of teachers as being different due to their status as paid civil servants made integration difficult. One education official commented that there is a feeling the change may **“tamper with norms and values”** within the community. Language barriers could also exist for teachers: several stated that when they first moved to their posting, they were not able to speak the dominant language of that community. However, it was pointed out that, at times, teachers do not help themselves in the way they behave. One member of a civil society organisation raised the point that there had been cases of teachers impregnating students, and this gave communities justification for their suspicion for outsiders. It was believed that to ensure teachers are respected within communities, it is crucial they set an example and act as role models in society. It is viewed that widespread use of the new PTA constitution would lead to schools being more reflective of communities’ norms and values, more relevant to communities’ needs and aspirations, which would lead to greater community ownership.

“Without motivation of teachers in schools the nation will be dormant” (male qualified teacher).

As highlighted at the beginning of this chapter, education is key to poverty reduction strategies and in turn teachers are key to quality education.

3 CONCLUSIONS AND FINAL RECOMMENDATIONS

This research has aimed to bring out the issues that teachers believe are most affecting their levels of motivation and morale. In doing so, it has also sought to balance these views with those of other key stakeholders to take into account actions currently being taken to improve the situation for teachers. These are more clearly outlined in the recommendations given below. The findings from this research further correspond with previous research conducted in the field of education in The Gambia over the past few years. In fact, from interviews and discussions with education officials, it was made clear that DoSBSE is aware of the issues affecting teachers. Therefore, what happens with this knowledge is the next important step. Not only does DoSBSE and its partners need to recognise the issues affecting teachers, but they also need to be prepared to implement their plans effectively and fill the funding gaps that are currently an inhibiting factor to this process. Below are the recommendations from teachers in The Gambia, with further information supplied from additional discussions. These recommendations have been arranged to highlight the different actors who have responsibility in taking forward each provision.

In recognition of the fact that many of these issues are already within education sector strategic plans, a table follows, in Appendix 2, outlining how the conclusions, recommendations and current policy fit together. From this information, it will be important for all stakeholders within the education processes to play their part, either as policy implementers, decision makers or advocates to ensure the issues that have been seen to be negatively impacting on teachers over several years are not allowed to further marginalise and cause stagnation in the profession.

3.1 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR GOVERNMENT AND THE DEPARTMENT OF STATE FOR BASIC AND SECONDARY EDUCATION

TERMS AND CONDITIONS OF SERVICE

Teachers recommend that government take into serious consideration their terms and conditions of service and make improvements to these if teacher motivation and retention is to improve. Government should investigate different financing options to ensure teachers are sufficiently remunerated. These options may include negotiating with international institutions to persuade them to break their current reluctance to finance recurrent costs, and/or by increasing the percentage of GDP the government spends on education. UNESCO recommends this should be at least 8 per cent if governments are to make meaningful progress towards quality Education for All. Currently, The Gambia spends only 1.9 per cent¹⁶ of its GDP on education, with aims to increase this to 2.7 per cent by 2011.

- Improved salary conditions should take into account and be commensurate with the fact that as a signatory to the ILO, The Gambia should follow and aim to achieve the recommendations set out in the *1966 ILO/UNESCO Recommendation Concerning the Status of Teachers* (see Appendix 3).
- Allowances and social assistance schemes should be used by government to improve further the financial circumstances and security of teachers. Those involved in the research suggested the following as possibilities:
 - health insurance scheme for teachers
 - payment of school fees of the children of teachers
 - housing schemes to encourage teachers to stay in the profession.
- Maternity leave conditions should be increased to a minimum of six months and should include all female teachers.
- Late payment should no longer be an issue of concern for teachers. Systems of payment should ensure timely and appropriate payment of all teachers. Information on payment should be made clear and readily available to teachers.

TRAINING AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

It is important for teachers' motivation that they are aware of clear career paths and opportunities for professional and self-development. Government should ensure opportunities for training and capacity building are available to teachers, and that teachers have clear information on this. In addition to professional development, DoSBSE should ensure promotion of teachers takes place in a timely fashion, recognising merit and good performance.

¹⁶ World Bank, *Summary Education Profile: The Gambia (2004) Ed Stats*, <http://devdata.worldbank.org/education/SummaryEducationProfiles/CountryData/GetShowData.asp?sCtry=GMB,Gambia,%20The> (accessed: April 2007).

- Development of the Teachers' Service Commission as laid out in the Education Policy would improve the issues teachers face in a number of areas, from recruitment to efficient promotion systems. The processes for the introduction of a Teachers' Service Commission need to be carried forward in a speedy manner for the benefits to reach the teachers in the classroom. Working in conjunction with a sustained appraisal system at the Human Resource Directorate, these factors would lead to clearly defined and progressive career paths open to teachers.
- Training should be made available to teachers at all levels. Extension of programmes to upgrade teachers serving as unqualified teachers should be sought, as well as in-service training and continuing professional development for qualified teachers. Capacity should be created to ensure training can take place at regional and school levels. Head teachers and others in supervisory roles should be supported and trained for these roles in recognition of the crucial impact they have on the motivation of teachers.

TEACHER DISTRIBUTION

In meeting its commitments to international goals, it is important for government to ensure regional disparities in education quality are minimised and eventually eradicated. In order to do this, efficient and effective deployment of teachers across the country is required, as well as increased teacher numbers to fill gaps that currently exist.

- A clear and coherent teacher Postings Policy should be fully implemented and teachers should be provided with clear and timely information regarding this. A Postings Policy should encompass provisions for the special case of female teachers. Teachers would also appreciate having more of a voice in the postings system.
- More teachers, in particular female teachers, need to be trained and encouraged (this encouragement is outlined through the recommendations from other themes) to stay within the profession, to limit the impact of teacher shortages on the work of other teachers within the schools.
- Teachers need to be made aware of the importance of equitable teacher distribution and encouraged to accept postings decisions to serve the national interest.

TEACHERS' VOICE AND PROFESSIONAL RELATIONSHIPS

Government needs to ensure teachers are provided with adequate opportunities to have their voices heard and necessary actions taken. It is also vital that teachers are provided with relevant and regular information updates on their profession and developments that may be taking place. Teachers need to feel supported at appropriate levels and this can only be done where effective systems exist at school and regional levels to support teachers professionally in the conduct of their work.

- Teachers require greater access to means of communication and transport; provisions should be made for easy telecommunication with schools and transport should be provided for those in difficult-to-reach areas. At both central and regional level, communication channels such as newsletters and radio announcements can be used where appropriate to update schools and teachers with information.
- Appropriate training and material support should be given to education managers at all levels to ensure they are in the position to effectively and efficiently support the classroom teacher.

SCHOOL FACILITIES

The teaching and learning environment has a clear impact on the ability of children to learn and teachers to teach. As such, recognition needs to be given to standards of school environments, their improvement and maintenance of standards.

- The Planning Directorate is responsible for classroom maintenance but further resources are required to meet the needs of school maintenance. These finances should be harnessed for maintenance to other school buildings and the provision of basic hygiene requirements to all schools. Where necessary, prioritisation should be made to ensure the schools in greatest need receive attention in the fastest possible time.
- Teaching and learning materials need to be sufficient to meet demands of class sizes, with greater access to materials for practical subjects.
- Increased numbers of good quality staff quarters should be available in schools. Teachers also recommend provisions of basic furniture and access to electricity through development of solar power systems.
- Staff quarters should be safe and suitable for female teachers living alone.

3.2 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR DONORS AND THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY

The recommendations that have been made for government departments are clearly outlined above. However, it will not be possible for government alone to meet these demands. The *Education Sector Strategic Plan 2006–2015* highlights a majority of the issues raised above and outlines measures that government seeks to take to deal with these issues. However there are obvious funding gaps for which assistance will need to be sought from the international community.

- The donor community and international financial institutions should live up to their international commitments and support the government in meeting funding gaps that have been identified through the *Education Sector Strategic Plan 2006–2015*.
- The cap placed on public spending by the IMF should be assessed, to determine to what extent it inhibits the government's autonomy to increase wage spending. If necessary, the cap should be relaxed to allow government to recruit, train and retain sufficient numbers of qualified teachers. Research has shown that relaxation of public spending caps, does not necessarily lead to increased inflation, as the IMF has consistently argued.¹⁷

3.3 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR REGIONAL EDUCATION DIRECTORATES

Some of the recommendations that have emerged will require specific action at the Regional Education Directorate level. These include:

TEACHER DISTRIBUTION

- As responsibility for exact teacher placement lies at the regional level, REDs need to ensure proper and appropriate implementation of the Postings Policy with clear information provided to teachers.

TEACHERS' VOICE AND PROFESSIONAL RELATIONSHIPS

- Communication from Regional Education Directorates (REDs) should be regular, clear and concise. As policy lays out plans for organisational development of REDs, this in turn should lead to a more efficient system of information delivery from REDs to schools. Regular information such as term dates should be clarified and circulated at the earliest possible date.
- The use of cluster monitors should enhance the support and levels of communication teachers feel they receive and it is important cluster monitors are used in the manner set out in their terms of reference and guidelines. When working in this way, cluster monitors should provide teachers with a level of support and supervision that adds to their sense of value, and in a way that would address any concerns they may have. Teachers should have clear information on the roles and responsibilities of cluster monitors and the support they are supposed to receive, as well as knowledge of the means of seeking redress where they are not receiving the appropriate support.

SCHOOL FACILITIES

- Schools and REDs must ensure accurate and timely reporting of maintenance issues takes place.

3.4 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR TEACHERS AND HEAD TEACHERS

Head teachers have an important role in supporting those who are in the classroom and, as such, have a responsibility in motivating the teachers within their school. The following recommendations look at how teachers and the school heads can work for improvements in their situation.

TEACHER DISTRIBUTION

- Teachers need to recognise the importance of accepting placements in rural locations to ensure an efficient postings system can be managed.

TEACHERS' VOICE AND PROFESSIONAL RELATIONSHIPS

- The role of head teachers in supporting classroom teachers must be fully recognised, and head teachers must be willing to use the information they gain in forthcoming training initiatives to improve school relations where necessary.
- Schools need to ensure information is shared among teachers and not restricted to the management or senior teachers (management styles and training for management would therefore have an impact on this).

17 Marphatia, A. and Archer, D., *Contradicting Commitments: how the achievement of Education for All is being undermined by the International Monetary Fund*, 2005.

STATUS AND VALUE

Teachers need to recognise the impact of their behaviour in relation to community views and, as such, should be willing to participate in the implementation of a Code of Conduct for teachers.

3.5 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR CIVIL SOCIETY

Finally, civil society must work with the education sector to ensure an acceptable quality of education is provided to children across the country. Teachers have made the following recommendations in which civil society has a powerful role to play.

STATUS AND VALUE

- Best Teacher Awards recognise the role of quality and hard-working teachers. The Gambia Teachers' Union (GTU) Best Teacher Award programme should be extended to provide a greater celebration of the status of teachers and encourage positive recognition of teachers in society.
- Community sensitisation should be undertaken to highlight the importance of education and the role of teachers, especially among communities that are seen as hostile to the school system. Additionally, parents should be made aware of their role in education and use of the newly developed Parent-Teacher Association constitution should strengthen school and community links.
- Students should be clear of their responsibilities within education, and misconceptions on the issue of child rights should be clarified to avoid misuse.

TAKING THE ADVOCACY FORWARD

- Support will be provided by VSO The Gambia to its civil society partners, to facilitate the development of an advocacy strategy to help communicate the recommendations detailed in this report, and urge those responsible to take appropriate action.
- As part of this advocacy strategy development process, civil society will be supported to look at each of the recommendations made and identify and agree priorities for advocacy on the issues raised by teachers and other stakeholders during the research process.

The recommendations may seem many, but as has been highlighted earlier, much of these have already been accounted for in Education Policy, and with more detail in the *Education Sector Strategic Plan 2006–2015*. The table in Appendix 2 highlights where these recommendations fit with the current Education Policy and strategies in place.

Above all, the government's progress towards the achievement of the EFA goals hinges on its ability to ensure current and new education policies are implemented and funding gaps are filled. Without such investment and implementation, with necessary consideration for the situation and motivation of teachers, teaching in The Gambia will remain a profession of last resort, and quality education will remain a distant dream.

Research has highlighted the pivotal role teachers' play in providing quality education. It is on this basis that VSO has been involved in the Valuing Teachers project and the justification for using these findings to further activate advocacy in this area, ensuring recommendations are taken into account and policy implementation remains on track. Research within The Gambia adds further weight to the issues that have been brought out by teachers and other stakeholders within education. Working together, it is vital that the voices of teachers are not left unheard, as they are crucial for the successful implementation of education plans.

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APPENDIX 1: METHODOLOGY AND SCOPE OF THE RESEARCH

Having previously conducted Valuing Teachers research in eight countries, VSO was keen to use its experience and lessons learned in the development of the methodology for its work in The Gambia, (as well as in Cambodia, Ethiopia, Mozambique and Nigeria).

The purpose of the research was to provide a qualitative look at the factors affecting the motivation and morale of teachers. As such, ensuring teachers' voices were heard clearly throughout was key to the process. Focus group discussions, individual interviews and profile questionnaires were conducted with teachers and head teachers. To gain a holistic view in a selection of the schools, community members and school children were given the opportunity to express their views on the issues under review. Finally, the Department of State for Education, regional officials, and prominent stakeholders such as The Gambia Teachers' Union were interviewed. Prior to all field research, a review of existing data and research relating to education in The Gambia was conducted; lists of documents reviewed are provided in the bibliography.

The research was primarily undertaken by a VSO volunteer recruited for the purpose. However, as this research is the result of collaborative efforts with partner organisations, teams were brought together in each region, involving the EFA Campaign Network and The Gambia Teachers' Union representatives in some of the field research. This helped to bring fresh and different perspectives throughout the data collection process and analysis, as well as sharing skills and knowledge – a central theme to all of the work VSO is involved in.

SCOPE OF THE RESEARCH

Twenty-four schools were involved in the research, including Mission schools and a Madrassa school. In total, 180 teachers and head teachers gave their views to make up the bulk of the data used in the findings of this research.

APPENDIX 2: COMPARISON OF RESEARCH FINDINGS AND POLICY DIRECTION

TERMS AND CONDITIONS OF SERVICE

Teachers' Needs/Findings of Research	Recommendations and Strategies in Existing Policy and Planning	New/Additional Recommendations
Teachers feel their salary is too low to meet the needs, they need an improvement to basic salary levels	Education Policy highlights the importance of motivation of teachers for their retention, one of the means of doing this is through better remuneration packages	1996 ILO/UNESCO Recommendation Concerning the Status of Teachers (see Appendix 3)
Allowances are seen as insufficient and at times unequal	Policy plans the use allowances to encourage teachers to 'difficult regions'	Equality in allowance provisions – where extra allowances are provided clear information on basis and funding for these allowances should be circulated
Teachers appreciate timely salary payment and clear information on this	Policy recommends decentralization of education service delivery	Payment to be made on time with correct information in advance, clear provisions for this should be made at regional level
Some teachers would like greater privacy of information on payment		Teachers should be consulted on their preferred manner of communication of information relating to payment
Teachers would benefit from access to additional benefits or income, there are no systems for helping teachers support their family at present		Social schemes for teachers, i.e. assistance with children's education costs or assistance with health care
Female teachers would like improved maternity leave conditions for all female teachers and UQTs in particular	Current conditions allow for 3 months maternity leave, split into 6 weeks prior to delivery and 6 weeks after delivering her child	Maternity leave increased to 6 months, to include all female teachers

TRAINING AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Teachers' Needs/Findings of Research	Recommendations and Strategies in Existing Policy	New/Additional Recommendations
UQTs would like access to the Gambia College or other opportunities for upgrading their qualifications	Policy commits to train all UQTs and provide opportunities for continuous professional development	Time scales set for the completion of training of all UQTs Efforts should be made to ensure a gender balance in those receiving training and, if necessary, special courses should be available to upgrade minority group teachers
Teachers would like regular access to in-service training and capacity for continued self-development	The INSETT unit of DoSBSE is mandated to provide continual in-service training and professional development to teachers. This should be operating on a decentralised level "In addition to meeting the demands of the expansion for new teachers through pre-service training programmes, the continuing need for upgrading the knowledge and skills of serving teachers will be equally essential" (Education Policy 2004-2015) "Training workshops and other professional development activities will continue to be conducted for school heads, teachers and students to ensure that every teacher and student in the country is computer and information literate" (Education Policy 2004-2015)	Ensure there is capacity to have training conducted at each level from school, cluster, regional to central areas
Head teachers require access to management training	"Skills enhancement for school managers will be given emphasis. Management training will be provided for school heads at all levels" (Education Policy 2004-2015)	
Teachers would like timely and regular information regarding promotions	Provisions are made within the Education Policy for the formulation of a Teachers' Service Commission to deal with the issues of teacher recruitment, assessment, promotion and other teacher affairs	
Teachers would like clear and fair modes of promotion that are apparent to all	Promotions will take into account periods served in classified areas HRD to further strengthen and develop plans for an effective appraisal system	Ensure teachers in far regions are not forgotten about, and promotions take place in an inclusive and non-discriminatory manner
Head teachers need to be substantive holders of their positions; many remain in acting positions as promotions are slow to take place	Policy recommends the formation of a Teachers' Service Commission, which will enhance appointment and promotion of teachers.	Promotion of teachers in acting position for over two years should be taken as speedily as possible, within the time frame of the next academic year Advancement of policy plans to establish a Teachers' Service Commission

TEACHERS' VOICE AND PROFESSIONAL RELATIONSHIPS

Teachers' Needs/Findings of Research	Recommendations and Strategies in Existing Policy	New/Additional Recommendations
Teachers would like greater assistance with transport to some rural schools, which can be difficult, unpredictable and time consuming; hardship schools have recently received one bicycle per school	PRSP – SPA II – ‘Creation of a Universal Service Fund to support expansion of utilities to poor settlements’	Provision of some form of transport to schools (for example, bicycle or donkey cart), financing set a decision of most appropriate form of transport to be taken at school level, taking into account gender appropriate issues
Teachers need a means of communication within the school; land phones within the schools would be the most effective manner of ensuring this		Land phones or reliable alternative within each school
Teachers would appreciate greater availability of information from the RED, which can be variable and at times late	Policy makes room for improvements to organisational structures at both regional and central levels to improve leadership and to better coordinate and manage programmes	Information newsletters or a similar form of regular information updates
Teachers appreciate the input of cluster monitors, however, it is important there is appropriate use of cluster monitors for supervision	Further development of cluster-based monitoring has provisions made for it in the strategic plan to ensure the capacity of the cluster monitoring system is sufficient to meet demand Cluster monitor guidelines lay out the roles and responsibilities of cluster monitors in providing support and supervision to teachers and schools	Ensure proper use of cluster monitors at regional levels; appraisal of the cluster monitor system should be in place with support available to them; mechanisms to redress any imbalances that exist should be in place Cluster monitor guidelines or at least clear information on the roles and responsibilities of cluster monitors should be available to all teachers
Communication within schools varies and depends on management styles; teachers would like positive examples to be followed in all schools	Strategic Plan – Quality Assurance Result Area 1: “Effective and efficient school management by 2015” plans are for schools to use a standard management manual, school management training and the use of the participatory performance monitoring system	Best practice examples of communication within schools should be highlighted and head teachers should be able to facilitate clear and regular information sharing sessions among teachers

TEACHER DISTRIBUTION

Teachers' Needs/Findings of Research	Recommendations and Strategies in Existing Policy	New/Additional Recommendations
<p>Teachers would like more choice and the opportunity to have their voices heard in the postings system</p>	<p>DoSBSE has a teacher Postings Policy, guidelines recommend teachers be posted to a region for the minimum period of five years and within a school for the minimum period of three years before review is made and teachers can request for transfer</p>	<p>Consultation with teachers on postings decisions</p> <p>Transparency within the postings system and clear consultation through the GTU in how the processes of postings are affecting teachers</p> <p>More effort should put in place to ensure the implementation of the policy</p>
<p>Teacher shortage within schools: some schools are not receiving their full teacher quota until term two, if at all</p>	<p>To ensure quality education there will be "provision of an adequate supply of trained teachers through cost effective pre-service teacher education and in-service training programmes" (Education Policy 2004–2015)</p>	

SCHOOL FACILITIES

Teachers' Needs/Findings of Research	Recommendations and Strategies in Existing Policy	New/Additional Recommendations
Teachers would like good quality staff quarters, particularly to ease postings to rural areas	<p>Provision is made through The Gambian policy for the introduction of a housing scheme as an incentive for teachers posted in rural areas</p> <p>Funding for staff quarters is being sought by DoSBSE from a number of donors</p>	<p>Provisions should be made for basic furniture and electricity (solar or generator) within staff quarters</p> <p>Quarters should be suitable for female teachers living alone</p>
Teachers require adequate furniture to be able to work effectively with their classes	DoSBSE recognise the need for increased furniture and to deal with classroom over crowding through the strategic plan	Class sizes should not exceed recommended ratios of 1:45; if possible they should be below this ratio
Teachers would benefit from a conducive learning and teaching environment; poor conditions and maintenance of classrooms and other school buildings are hampering their efforts	<p>Education Sector Strategic Plan 2006–2015: "Result area 1 – a school environment conducive for teaching and learning." The strategic plan aims at provision of water and toilet facilities, improved school fencing and maintenance of school buildings</p> <p>PRSP II – intervention area – improved quality and quantity infrastructure in all schools</p>	
Teachers require basic provisions within the school, such as water and toilet facilities, are maintained to a sanitary standard	<p>DoSBSE has standard specifications for the construction of classrooms, toilets and kitchens</p> <p>EMIS data collection includes issues of school facilities and maintenance</p>	Appropriate, separate boys and girls, male and female toilet provisions should be a priority to school authorities
Teachers need adequate amounts of TLMs for the number of pupils and to cover all subjects, including practical subjects	<p>Provision for instructional materials is made through Education Policy and the current strategic plan looks at increasing the funds available for this, ensuring each pupil has a set of textbooks and a growth in the use of ICT</p> <p>In addition to this, the strategic plan looks at initiatives to use more locally produced TLMs</p> <p>PRSP II – priority area to provide adequate quality and quantity of teaching and learning materials</p>	Exercise books should be provided for children

STATUS AND VALUE

Teachers' Needs/Findings of Research	Recommendations and Strategies in Existing Policy	New/Additional Recommendations
Teachers feel there is a lack of respect and regard for them within society	Gender Education Unit recruitment drive to promote the teaching profession to Senior Secondary School leavers, in particular girls	Expansion of the GTU Best Teacher Award Code of Conduct agreed by teachers to ensure a set of standards for teachers to work to
Some teachers feel there are regional disparities in how teachers are viewed by society and from education authorities; teachers in all regions need to be considered equally	Policy commits to sensitise communities and create more space for their involvement and participation in education	Importance of GTU representing the interests of all teachers to the relevant authorities
Change in student attitudes can lead to difficulties in student discipline	Corporal Punishment Policy	
Communities' view of teachers is variable and at times negative; teachers benefit where they receive support from the community		Community sensitisation on the importance of education and building links and communication pathways between teachers and the community
Parental involvement in education is variable, and where it is lacking, teachers view this negatively and would like parents to have a greater awareness about the joint roles in providing a useful education	Policy commitment as above to sensitise communities Whole School Development has piloted the greater involvement of community members within the development of the school A new PTA constitution has been developed to provide more consistent guidelines to the organisation, involvement and functioning of PTAs	

APPENDIX 3: COMPARISON OF RESEARCH FINDINGS AND POLICY DIRECTION

1966 ILO/UNESCO RECOMMENDATION CONCERNING THE STATUS OF TEACHERS¹⁸

TEACHERS' SALARIES SHOULD:

- a reflect the importance to society of the teaching function and hence the importance of teachers as well as the responsibilities of all kinds which fall upon them from the time of their entry into service;
- b compare favourably with salaries paid in other occupations requiring similar or equivalent qualifications;
- c provide teachers with the means to ensure a reasonable standard of living for themselves and their families as well as to invest in further education or in the pursuit of cultural activities, thus enhancing their professional qualification;
- d take account of the fact that certain posts require higher qualifications and experience and carry greater responsibilities.

18 Article 115 of the *1966 ILO/UNESCO Recommendation Concerning the Status of Teachers* www.ilo.org/public/english/dialogue/sector/techmeet/ceart/rec663.htm#teachers (accessed: April 2007).

