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## **Teacher Motivation in Tanzania and Other Sub Saharan African Countries**

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## **Teacher Motivation in Tanzania and other Sub Saharan African countries**

### **Abstract**

This synthesis report is based on the findings and recommendations of national case studies in the two poorest regions of the world, namely sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia, where the greatest challenges remain with regard to Education For All (EFA). A total of 12 studies were undertaken in the following countries: Sub-Saharan Africa: Ghana, Kenya, Lesotho, Malawi, Nigeria, Sierra Leone, Tanzania, and Zambia. South Asia: Bangladesh, India, Nepal, and Pakistan. This is one of a series of Education Papers issued by the Central Research Department of the Department For International Development. This study was published in 2007, being coauthored by Paul Bennell and Kwame Akyeampong

This report synthesises the main findings and recommendations of an international research project on teacher motivation and incentives in sub-Sahara Africa and South Asia. The study addressed the following four main questions:

- To what extent is there a problem of poor motivation among teachers in sub-Saharan Africa
- and South Asia? Does this amount to a 'crisis', as has been suggested by some observers?
- If so, what are the main reasons for poor teacher motivation?
- How do poor motivation and incentives affect teacher performance and the overall effectiveness of national education systems?
- What should be done to ensure that teachers are adequately motivated?

The most critical finding that emerges from this study is that very sizeable proportions of primary school teachers, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa, have low levels of job satisfaction and are poorly motivated. Many tens of millions of children are, therefore, not being taught properly and are not receiving even a minimally acceptable education. The unavoidable conclusion is that most schooling systems are faced with what amounts to a teacher motivation crisis, which has far-reaching implications for the education Millennium Development Goals for basic education and for development as a whole.

## 1.0 Introduction

Major conclusion of the extensive literature on school effectiveness in developed countries is

that achieving better learning outcomes depends fundamentally on improvements in teaching.

Although there are many other factors that affect learning outcomes, teaching is the main school-level determinant of school performance. Thus, ways to increase teacher motivation and capabilities are central to any systematic attempt to improve learning outcomes. A considerable

amount of research has been conducted on what makes the 'effective' teacher. And yet, the focus

to date of policy reform in most countries has been on improving learning outcomes through a

better allocation of resources, more accountability, curriculum reforms and refined assessment

systems, and better pre- and in-service teacher training. However, the limited impact of many

of these interventions has forced politicians and policymakers to focus increasingly on the needs

of teachers themselves.

The literature on teacher motivation and incentives in developed countries has many common

or similar themes with the very much more limited literature on this subject in low-income

developing countries. In particular, it is widely contended that the status of teachers in most

OECD countries has declined appreciably during the last fifty years, teacher autonomy and

creativity has been curtailed by more control and regulation, and that teachers are being asked

to do more with less. Teachers also complain about the lack of variety and role differentiation in their careers, the limited incentives for them to improve their practice and develop as professionals, and the limited linkages between their performance, teacher compensation and teacher development (IIEP, 2004).

Research in OECD countries has also consistently found that 'working with children' is the main determinant of teacher job satisfaction. Consequently, it is the rewarding nature of the job itself rather than pecuniary gain that is the primary motivation for becoming a teacher.

A comprehensive literature review by Spear et al (2000) highlights the wide range of factors that influence teacher job satisfaction and motivation in the United Kingdom. The main factor found to contribute to job satisfaction of teachers is working with children whereas job dissatisfaction was primarily attributed to work overload, poor pay, and perceptions of how teachers are viewed by society. They applied Herzberg's two-factor model as the overarching theoretical framework in synthesising the main findings of the studies reviewed. Their main conclusions are that, in order to experience high job satisfaction, teachers need an intellectual challenge, a high level of professional autonomy, to feel that they are benefiting society, to enjoy good relations with their colleagues, and to spend a sufficient proportion of their time working with children. Enhanced pay, improved status, a less demanding workload and fewer administrative responsibilities do not necessarily bring about higher levels of job satisfaction.

Another important finding of the review is that studies have consistently identified the same

variations in the job satisfaction levels of teachers depending on certain individual and school characteristics. In particular, with regard to gender differences, female teachers tend to have higher levels of job satisfaction than their male colleagues, but male teachers are generally more satisfied over their level of influence over school policies and practices. Teachers in rural areas report higher levels of job satisfaction than those in urban areas.

In developed countries, pay incentives have been found to be generally ineffective in increasing teacher motivation. Teacher motivation is based on intrinsic factors and that true job satisfaction is based on higher order needs (Sylvia and Hutchinson, 1994). Offering additional extrinsic rewards has even been found to undermine the intrinsic motivation of teachers (see Deci et al, 1999).

Another common theme is that failure to secure teacher 'buy-in' invariably leads to education reforms and other improvement interventions foundering. In particular, when external 'ideas' and innovations are paired with escalating controls, learning outcomes usually diminish. "The irony is that trying to strong-arm the process of renewal can circumvent teachers' need to establish a sense of agency over personal change" (Northwest Regional Education Laboratory:10).

Research studies have shown that motivation is most precarious when people are confronted by pressures to act on something that is not of particular interest to them. Consequently, "unless

teachers retain a sense of agency about why and how they might teach differently, the call for new approaches and innovations will likely ring hollow” (NREL:1). Needless to say, the environment for the internalization of new ideas is even poorer in national public education systems in SSA and South Asia.

Patterns of motivation are also influenced by teachers’ personal characteristics and perceptions

of their roles as teachers. Williams (1998) mentions research evidence that teacher attrition (i.e.

individual decisions to leave the profession permanently) tend to be negatively related to age and

positively related to intellectual capacity and educational attainment. One cannot assume that

teachers’ motivation, even if it is related to attrition, necessarily has the same set of relationships.

Murnane (1987) suggests that some university graduates in the United States of America are

attracted to teaching as a ‘medium-term’ occupation rather than a permanent career. However,

teachers’ age and qualifications are treated as potentially important factors in this study. Finally, recent research shows that teachers suffer more than other professional groups from occupational lack of motivation (see Evans, 1999).

## **1.1 Research methods**

The main source of information for this research project is the 12 country case studies. All the

country case studies have three common components, namely a core set of 10-20 interviews with key education stakeholders, the collection of all relevant documentation, and the analysis of statistical data relating to teacher motivation and incentives. In addition, extended case studies were completed in six countries, which entailed surveying 10-15 primary schools in two representative rural and urban clusters. Common set of key individuals from the Ministry of Education, teacher trade

union(s), education NGOs, academic researchers and aid donors was interviewed in each country

Key documentation included national education strategies and policy reviews, schemes of service for teachers including salary scales for the last 10 years, trade union submissions and supporting analyses for salary reviews and other conditions of service, and the impact of HIV/AIDS on the education sector. Information on teacher staffing patterns and flows (qualification and experience profiles, recruitment deployment, transfers and attrition) was obtained from MoE Planning and Research Departments, and in particular, education management information systems (EMIS). Other statistics such as consumer price indexes and household survey data were obtained from national statistical offices. Extended case studies were conducted in six countries (Ghana, Lesotho, Sierra Leone, Tanzania and Zambia in Sub-Saharan Africa and India in South Asia). Here, in addition to the stakeholder interviews and document and statistical review, a purposive sample of primary schools was selected in order to explore in depth a wide range of issues pertaining to teacher job satisfaction and motivation

### **1.3 Teacher motivation levels and trends**

There is a wide range of views about teacher motivation in Africa and South Asia, most of which are country specific. However, there appear to be mounting concerns that unacceptably high proportions of teachers working in public school systems in many low income developing countries (LIDCs) are poorly motivated due to a combination of low morale and job satisfaction, poor incentives, and inadequate controls and other behavioural sanctions. For example, the 2000 Education For All (EFA) Country Assessment for Pakistan notes that poor teacher motivation is a 'colossal problem', which is seriously compounded by 'political interference'.

The Voluntary Service Overseas (VSO) report on valuing teachers concludes that "a potential crisis in the teaching profession threatens the ability of national

government's to reach internationally agreed targets to expand and improve education. In many developing countries, the teaching force is demoralised and fractured" (VSO, 2002:1). The report is based on three country case studies in Malawi, Zambia and Papua New Guinea. It focuses on factors in four areas: the conditions of employment of teachers; their situation as educators; their relationship with the local community; and their voice in educational policy. The report shows a plethora of negative factors in all these areas and not many redeeming features in the educational systems involved. Of particular concern is poor teacher management at all levels, from the ministry of education to the school, and teachers' perception that the decline in their pay has adversely affected their status, both nationally and locally. Other specific problems that are highlighted include delayed payment of salaries, housing shortages, insufficient upgrading opportunities, lack of learning materials, a decline of inspectorate services, and insufficient involvement of teachers' representatives in policy making.

The report by the Global Campaign for Education also concludes that "it is evident that in the five years since the Education for All goals were restated at Dakar, improving teacher motivation has still not been sufficiently prioritised as a major concern of national or international policy makers. As a result, teacher motivation and morale remain in a chronic state of decline". The main reasons for this decline are identified as large class sizes, erosion in the quality of teacher training, the employment of para-teachers, other cost cutting measures such as multiple shifts, and poor pay (GCE, 2005:1).

Research in richer developing countries has also found low levels of teacher motivation. For example, recent surveys in Argentina and Mexico found that most teachers do not wish to teach in the classroom. Teachers' ambitions tend to gravitate around two poles. Either they want to be managers (at either the school or higher levels) or they want to do other types of education related work, such as writing textbooks and educational planning (see IIEP, 2004). In general, however, very little robust evidence is presented to support

the views and assertions about teacher motivation in LIDCs. In the absence of adequate information, the incidence of poor teacher motivation and misbehaviour could well be seriously over-exaggerated mainly because of the pervasive negative stereotyping of teachers (especially by the media) in many countries. On the few occasions when teachers and school managers have been directly asked about teacher motivation, reported levels of morale have generally been quite high. For example, as part of a study of the impact of the AIDS epidemic on education in Botswana, Malawi and Uganda, representative groups of primary and secondary school teachers were asked if they agreed with the statement that 'teacher morale at this school is high'. Morale in Botswana and Uganda was reasonably good whereas there appears to be more cause for concern in Malawi, especially at primary schools (see Bennell et al, 2002).

Another study on the impact of AIDS in Tanzania, Mozambique, Kenya and Uganda, noted that "morale among teachers is surprisingly high" (Carr-Hill et al, 2003:44). A recent survey in Ghana also concluded that teacher morale is "reasonably high" (Akyeampong, 2003). Only 13 per cent of teacher respondents indicated that they 'did not enjoy teaching' although nearly one-third stated that they did not intend to remain in the teaching profession. Conversely, over 80 percent of primary school teachers recently interviewed in Sierra Leone said they did not want to be teachers. Nonetheless, in a recent survey of primary schools in Sierra Leone, primary school head teachers indicated that, if they could, they would replace less than 20 percent of teachers because they are poorly motivated (see Bennell et al, 2004).

Teacher morale also varies noticeable across schools in the same locations. For example, in a small survey of secondary schools in Lusaka, Zambia, the breakdown of head teacher ratings of

teacher morale was high, 44 percent, moderate/average, 22 percent and poor, 33 percent (see Bennell, Bulwani and Musikanga, 2003). An additional de-motivating factor in Sub-Saharan Africa is the HIV/AIDS epidemic, partly because of its effects on pupils through their home environments and partly because of its effect on teachers themselves. However reliable, empirical findings about the latter are generally lacking. Bennell's (2003a) review of the evidence refutes the notion that teachers themselves are a 'high-risk group' in relation to the epidemic.

#### **1.4 The determinants of teacher motivation**

The study has revealed a complex array of factors causing teacher demotivation as summarized below;

##### **1.4.1 Accountability**

The degree to which teachers are properly accountable to their clients (children and parents) and their managers (head teachers and district and national level managers) has a powerful influence on teacher motivation levels. In South Asia, in particular, the 'accountability culture' is very weak. The Nepal reports notes "primary school teachers at government schools seem to care little about the effect of their performance on student achievement... Whether they teach or not, they are paid" (Devkota, 2005:13). On the other hand, private school teachers are constantly evaluated on the basis of student performance.

The politicization of the teaching profession is perhaps the single most important reason for low teacher accountability in South Asia, which affects nearly all aspects of job motivation including recruitment, deployment, promotion, and management control. In Pakistan, with

increasing 'political interference', the status of teachers started to decline rapidly from the 1960s onwards. "Teachers' appointments and transfers have become political. Many primary school teachers are enlisted as election agents. These teachers often develop patron-client relationships that they later exploit by extracting benefits from the political elite" (Khan, 2005:21). In Nepal, teachers are divided along political lines with their own separate organisations. The politicisation of the education system has also resulted in a proliferation of schools with untrained teachers and a lack of resources to cater for expanded enrolments. The education bureaucracy has become 'paralysed' and is highly impartial with respect to the recruitment and deployment of teachers.

#### **1.4.2 The Policy Environment**

Universal Primary Education (UPE) is now the single most important education goal in nearly all low-income developing countries. However, the pursuit of this goal has both positive and negative impacts on teacher motivation. Efforts to attain UPE goals are usually accompanied by much increased resource flows with the support of international donor partners. But, at the same time, teachers can become seriously demoralised, especially when teacher recruitment does not keep pace with rapidly increasing enrolments, as has generally been the case. In Kenya, for example, "the Free Primary Education initiative appears to be strongly resented by primary

teachers in areas where the demand for education is strongest... Teachers now have to cope

with much increased workload with the introduction of UPE at the same time that the resources to deal with this increased workload have been strained” (Hyde et al, 2005:8).

Workloads and class sizes have increased appreciably in many countries as a direct result of the

UPE policy. Teachers and teacher unions complain that most of the additional resources have

been used to increase enrolment capacity and education quality without directly addressing the

professional needs of teachers.

#### **1.4.3 Security and Conflict**

War, insurgency and insecurity have had a major impact on teacher motivation and commitment in countries such as Sierra Leone and Nepal. Maoist insurgents targeted teachers in Nepal and many fled to the towns. Those who stayed had to pay ‘levies’ to the insurgents, ranging from 5-25 percent of their pay. However, the ending of a long running conflict, if coupled with major efforts to rebuild the education system, may have a major positive impact on teacher morale. The lack of secure and safe school compounds is also a widespread concern, especially in urban schools in Africa.

#### **1.4.4 Promotion opportunities**

Career progression opportunities remain limited in most countries, which mean that a teacher’s

salary increases by relatively little over time. Being able to double one’s salary over a 30-year

career is still the exception in Africa (see Table 5.6). Teachers in some countries (such as

Malawi) complain that their promotion prospects are considerably worse than for other civil

servants in comparable occupations.

Promotion criteria are also still based largely on qualifications and years of service. Consequently, both good and bad teachers get promoted together, which many teachers find very demoralising. In some countries (such as Malawi) promotions are based on interviews, which are widely criticized for their lack of transparency. In Bangladesh, only 5-10 percent of teachers manage to get promoted to higher positions during their careers. There are clear guidelines for promotion in Nepal, but they are 'rarely applied'. In Kenya, teachers who live in remote areas have virtually no chance of being visited by an inspector, which dramatically reduces their promotion prospects. In Pakistan, teachers have to acquire additional qualifications in order to be promoted, which many, especially women and those working in remoter areas, find especially difficult to study.

#### **1.4.5 Pay**

The overwhelming consensus from the stakeholder and teacher interviews in all but two of the 12 case study countries is that teachers are seriously underpaid and that this, more than anything else, is the key factor undermining teacher morale and motivation. With the sole exception of India, most teachers at the survey schools in the five other extended case study countries rated their pay as poor or very poor. Teachers in most low-income countries earn poverty wages of USD2-4 a day. Typically, teachers in Africa have at least five direct dependents. Only in India and Lesotho do qualified teachers earn anything like a living wage that cover seven their most basic subsistence needs. The situation for the very large numbers of unqualified teachers is considerably worse. Pay is so low that teachers, like many of their students, do not eat properly before coming to school. Over one-third of teacher respondents in Ghana, Sierra Leone and Zambia agreed with the statement that 'teachers in this school come to work hungry

#### **1.4.6 Teacher Competence**

There are two inter-related aspects of occupational motivation- 'will-do' and 'can-do'.

Will-do

motivation refers to the extent to which an employee has adopted the organisations goals and

objectives. Can-do motivation, on the other hand, focuses on factors that influence the capacity of individuals to realise organizational goals. For example, a teacher may be highly committed to the attainment of the school's learning goals, but she may lack the necessary competencies to teach effectively, which ultimately becomes de-moralising and de-motivating. The actual and perceived competence of primary school teachers is therefore a key issue.

#### **1.4.7 Working and Living Conditions**

All of the 12 country case studies highlight the huge impact that working and living conditions have on teacher morale and motivation and thus their classroom performance. The key factors are workload (number of pupils and working hours), general classroom conditions, collegial and management support, location, living arrangements and distance to work.

**1.4.8 Vocational commitment and occupational status:** The low and declining status of the primary school teacher is identified as a major factor contributing to low occupational status and poor motivation in all the country reports. In most countries, this is closely related to limited vocational commitment to teaching among the majority of teachers. The general perception of stakeholders and teachers in all countries is that the teaching profession no longer commands the high status it enjoyed 30 years ago and that teachers, especially primary schoolteachers, are now 'undervalued by society', The country studies confirm that teaching is very much regarded as 'employment of last resort' by most school leavers and university graduates.

Teachers also complain that the emergence of the para-teacher in many countries (especially in South Asia) has reduced the status of regular teachers. The shortening

of pre-service training in many African countries to just one year in college followed by one year of supervised on the job training has also lowered the overall standing of teaching in relation to other professions. Occupations that have high levels of solidarity are much more likely to have higher levels of self-esteem and thus status and job satisfaction. Occupational solidarity among teachers is generally low in Africa, but quite high in South Asia. In most of the case study countries, teachers have low opinions concerning the overall effectiveness and value for money of their trade unions. Multiple teacher unions are increasingly the norm in both Africa and Asian countries, which seriously undermine occupational solidarity, especially when unions are negotiating with government.

### **1.5 The impact on schooling**

All the country case studies conclude that poor teacher motivation and inadequate incentives have far-reaching adverse impacts on the behaviour and overall performance of primary school teachers and thus learning outcomes. Two key areas are identified by the studies, namely the impact on the equitable and efficient deployment of teachers across the country and the professional behaviour of teachers inside and outside the classroom.

***Staffing issues:*** The country studies confirm that the major staffing challenge for public

Education systems in most low-income countries remains how to achieve an equitable spatial

distribution of teachers between rural and urban areas. The unattractiveness of living and working in rural areas means that most teachers strongly resist being posted to rural schools.

Consequently, rural schools invariably have relatively less qualified and experienced teachers,

teacher turnover is higher and, with higher vacancy rates, teachers have to work harder than

their colleagues in urban schools. In all the 12 country case studies, teachers point to high and often increasing workloads as a key contributor to low morale. Given the difficulties of staffing rural schools, teachers at these schools generally have to work

a lot harder. Recruitment freezes prompted by the acute fiscal crisis in many countries have also driven up vacancy rates and increased teacher workloads.

High rates of teacher attrition through resignations are a key indicator of low levels of teacher

job satisfaction and motivation. While resignation rates are very low in all the 12 case study

countries, in sub-Saharan Africa this is not the consequence of high levels of job satisfaction,

but rather an acute paucity of alternative employment opportunities. Low attrition in the context of pervasive teacher de-motivation only tends to make matters worst because dissatisfied teachers are unable to leave. High teacher transfer rates between schools are also indicative of teachers who are unhappy with where they are working and, more generally, with what they are doing. This is a major problem in most countries in sub-Saharan Africa. Again, rural schools are affected far more.

***Teacher behaviour and performance:*** All 12 of the country studies raise major concerns about the behaviour and performance of teachers, which relate directly to low levels of job satisfaction and motivation. Poor professional behaviour (lateness, absenteeism, laziness) seriously compromises schooling quality and learning outcomes. Also, weak teacher management and lack of a sense of accountability means that public school teachers often get away with under-performance and, at times, gross professional misconduct.

High rates of teacher absenteeism have been consistently reported in recent surveys in Africa,

Asia and South America. These can be directly attributed to low levels of teacher commitment

and accountability. Absenteeism rates are also quite high in most of the country studies, but

only a relatively small proportion of these absences in the African countries are categorized as

'non-authorized'. There are relatively few teacher dismissals due to gross professional misconduct. However a major problem in many countries is that head teachers lack the authority to be able discipline teachers effectively.

Industrial action or the threat of industrial action among teachers is common in most of the

case study countries. Increasingly frequent official and unofficial strikes are a clear signal of

growing levels of dissatisfaction with pay and other conditions of service.

In most countries, low pay forces teachers to find additional sources of income.

Secondary

income activities create divided attention and loyalty to teaching and impact negatively on the quality of schooling.

## **1.6 What should be done?**

Faced with what amounts to a motivation crisis among primary school teachers in most low income developing countries, what should be done to tackle this fundamental constraint on

the attainment of the Education For All Millennium Development Goals? Each country study presents a set of recommendations about how to improve teacher job satisfaction and motivation. While these inevitably vary from one country to another, recommendations in the following four key areas are identified as top priorities in virtually all the reports: better incentives for rural teachers; improved conditions of service; attractive career structures; and increased teacher and school accountability.

- Major improvement in the incentives for teachers in rural schools is identified as the top priority in nearly every country. Unless this is done, the large majority of children who live in rural areas will continue to receive poor quality education. In the short term, the provision of good quality housing with running water and electricity for teachers is the probably the most cost-effective way of attracting and retaining teachers at hard-to-staff rural schools. In most countries, rural allowances would

have to be at least half of basic pay in order to staff schools with qualified and able teachers. However, without external support, funding these allowances would be prohibitively costly for most governments.

- Nearly all the country reports recommend that teacher pay should be significantly increased.

The core of the teacher motivation crisis, especially in sub-Saharan Africa, is that teacher pay

is seriously inadequate. As the country studies clearly show, despite some improvement in

pay in recent years in some countries, most primary school teachers, particularly in relatively

high-cost urban centres, are simply unable to meet their basic household needs. As a result,

many of them are forced to find other sources of income. Those who cannot earn additional

income slide into poverty. Primary school teacher salaries in most countries in Anglophone

Africa should be at least doubled. However, given the severity of the fiscal crisis that besets most governments, pay increases of anything like this magnitude are completely unaffordable from domestic resources. Given the strong commitment of the international community to the attainment of the EFA goals with acceptable learning outcomes, serious consideration should, therefore, be given to how teacher's pay in these countries can be supplemented using external funding.

- Attractive career structures for primary school teachers need to be urgently introduced in most countries with regular promotions based on clearly specified and transparent performance-related criteria. Teachers who work at hard-to-staff rural schools should also be given accelerated promotion and/or preferential access to qualification upgrading opportunities.

- Teacher accountability to school management and to parents and the community as a whole should be increased. This is particularly the case at government primary

schools in most of South Asia where very limited teacher and school accountability seriously undermine the provision of quality basic education .Other priority areas are regular professional development, decentralised and well managed teacher postings systems, more effective teacher trade unions, and workplace programmes related to HIV/AIDS.

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