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This paper has been prepared for the international conference on ‘Teachers for Education for All in Africa: Collaborative action to address the teacher gap’ by Monika Beutel, Research Consultant and VSO Volunteer, with assistance and contributions from Augusto Macicame, Education Programme Manager, VSO Mozambique and Purna Kumar Shrestha, Education Policy and Advocacy Adviser, VSO International.
INTRODUCTION

These research findings are based on qualitative social research carried out among teachers and other education stakeholders using focus groups and semi-structured interviews¹ in different regions and provinces of Mozambique between July and September 2010. The research emphasises the views of teachers and other education stakeholders about the factors that influence the quality of education.

Teacher shortages are an issue in many low-income countries as they try to meet the UN Millennium Development Goals and the Education for All goals by 2015. Many countries use so-called ‘para-teachers’³ and contract teachers to plug the teacher gap. Mozambique has employed untrained teachers [the local equivalent to ‘para-teachers’] and makes extensive use of contract teachers, who may be trained or untrained.

The Mozambican Government’s recent response to teacher shortages has been to fast-track teacher training (the ‘10+1’ model⁴) and to reduce grade repetition by pupils who had not met the required standards (e.g. by introducing semi-automatic progression between grades, which substantially reduced the proportion of pupils who were repeating a school year). As a result of these measures, no new untrained primary teachers have been contracted since 2008, but untrained teachers still make up 29 per cent of the primary teaching force.

Teachers Talking is part of VSO’s Valuing Teachers advocacy initiative which supports the achievement of the Education for All goals, with particular focus on the quality of education. The research highlights the pivotal role that teachers play in improving educational quality. Valuing Teachers research reports present teachers’ views about changes in educational policies that affect their work, professional identity and motivation. The present report’s focus is on the views of teachers and other education stakeholders about the impact on the quality of primary education exercised by differently qualified and trained teachers, and teachers working under different conditions of service. It concentrates on teachers in the public education system.²

¹ Twenty-nine focus groups were conducted, involving 254 teachers, 37 teacher trainers, 36 students at teacher training colleges and 19 members of school councils. Thirty-five semi-structured interviews were held with officials and members of governmental and non-governmental organisations.
² This research is funded by the National Union of Teachers (NUT), UK.
³ VSO defines para-teachers as those who do not meet the minimum standard required to teach in their country. Typically, these unqualified teachers may have received little or no pre-service teacher training and be employed on different terms and conditions from professional teachers.
⁴ The 10+1 model provides one year of teacher training after 10 years of schooling.
QUALIFICATIONS AND TRAINING OF MOZAMBIQUE’S PRIMARY TEACHERS

In Mozambique all teachers are qualified in the sense of having obtained some education certificate (basic, medium or higher). Primary teachers have usually obtained basic or medium qualification levels.

Teachers’ pay depends on the level of their qualifications; within each broad qualification/salary category, there are classes and ladders that represent allowances and years of service.

In Mozambique the distinction between ‘trained’ and ‘untrained’ teachers (rather than between ‘qualified’ and ‘unqualified’ teachers) is emphasised. There are some worries about the quality of teaching delivered by untrained teachers, although many of them have now gained considerable experience and appear to be doing a good job. At present trained and untrained teachers seem to work well alongside each other. Their working conditions are the same and there is a semi-institutionalised system whereby trained teachers give support to untrained teachers.

There have been many different models of in-service training through which different cohorts of teachers have been trained. Stakeholders expressed concern about the length and quality of the training that the current ‘10+1 model’ of fast-tracked teachers provides.

TEACHERS’ CONDITIONS OF SERVICE

There is an important distinction between teachers who are civil servants and teachers who are on temporary one-year contracts (generally renewable). The status of contract teachers is meant to be temporary: all teachers (trained and untrained) start off as contract teachers and all teachers are in principle eligible to become civil servants, but for many, being on temporary contract appears to have become a permanent situation. On paper the criteria for moving from being a contract teacher to becoming a civil servant seem to be clear, but the actual practice is less so. The length of time it takes to become a civil servant can vary considerably and appears to be governed by the employing authority’s budgetary considerations and constraints, as well as by bureaucracy. Many contract teachers find the current arrangements confusing and frustrating.

Civil servants and contract teachers are paid according to the same salary categories – which means that the actual salary an individual gets depends on their qualification level and their length of service. Yet there are clear differences between teachers in terms of job security, pension rights and other material benefits, as well as in de facto opportunities for participation in in-service training and, significantly, in terms of opportunities for career progression. Contract teachers are not able to take on positions of leadership (e.g. as pedagogical directors or school directors) and there is an age bar for entering the civil service – with the consequence that some teachers’ careers are permanently blighted.
Conversely when teachers were asked about the factors they regard as important for good educational quality, they particularly mentioned:

- Well-qualified and well-trained teachers
- Professional commitment to teaching
- Good pay and conditions for teachers
- Good working conditions for teachers and a good learning environment for pupils
- Good educational policies
- Parent and community involvement

This list includes in priority order those issues which teachers mentioned that can be affected by teachers’ training (both pre- and in-service), their conditions of service and their working conditions and general social context. Teachers also mentioned other factors that would help to improve educational quality, in particular smaller class sizes\(^6\) and better availability of teaching and learning materials. These additional factors are considered in greater detail in the main report. The focus of this summary and of the terms of reference for the research is on teachers’ status (trained or untrained, civil servant or contract teacher).

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\(^5\) Trained and untrained teachers can be either civil servants or contract teachers

\(^6\) The current pupil-teacher ratio in Mozambican primary education is 66:1

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A UNIFIED OR FRAGMENTED PROFESSION?

The distinction between untrained teachers and differently trained teachers on one hand, and between civil servants and contract teachers on the other\(^5\), threatens to divide or fragment the profession. It may also increase the level of demotivation among members of the teaching force, particularly as the criteria which enable some members to gain secure conditions of service or to benefit from professional development are not consistently applied and/or not well understood by teachers on the ground. Low motivation and low professional commitment have potentially serious consequences for the processes of teaching and learning, hence for the quality of education.

THE QUALITY OF PRIMARY EDUCATION

The fieldwork explored the effect on educational quality of the different teacher statuses, recent education reforms and other factors. There is widespread concern that educational quality in Mozambique is actually declining rather than improving, a view expressed during the fieldwork by almost all participating education stakeholders. The main reasons given by teachers for poor educational quality are (in order of importance):

- ‘Bad’ interpretation of policy by head teachers and local education officers (in particular the ‘semi-automatic progression’ of students, introduced with the new curriculum)
- ‘Inappropriate’ education policies for Mozambique
- Lack of involvement of parents and community members, often unaware of how to support a child’s education or focused solely on their family’s livelihood
- Lack of the material conditions for good teaching and learning (classrooms, desks, books, etc.)
- Lack of commitment from many teachers
- Many teachers being untrained or badly trained
- Few opportunities for continuing professional development for teachers
- Too many children per class

\(^5\) Trained and untrained teachers can be either civil servants or contract teachers
WHAT CAN BE DONE TO IMPROVE EDUCATIONAL QUALITY?

The research explored each of the above factors in more detail through discussion with teachers and other stakeholders. The findings suggest that educational quality can improve:

- When teachers are well-qualified and trained with longer in-service training that emphasises pedagogy. The existence of a multitude of teacher training models has not helped to develop a well-prepared and cohesive teaching force; greater stability in training regimes is needed.
- When teachers embrace (own) the education policies they are helping to implement. This requires better communication between education officials, school directors and teachers; more in-service training would also be helpful.
- When teachers have regular opportunities to participate in continuing professional development in order to update and upgrade their skills and knowledge. This makes them feel valued and appreciated for their contributions to education and educational quality.
- When teachers are well-rewarded and well-regarded. Most teachers have low salaries and they lack some of the fringe benefits available to other professional groups. Teachers and other stakeholders, such as school council members, feel that teachers' poor pay and consequent poor living conditions have led to a lowering of the status of the teaching profession within communities.
- When teachers work in a supportive context that includes facilitative management at school, district and provincial education level, and when the physical context in which they work is supportive of teaching and learning, e.g. through the availability of desks and books etc. A conducive environment can do much to counter division and fragmentation and to help keep the teaching force unified.

Good quality education takes place when teachers are effective in helping pupils learn. According to the research findings this depends to a large extent on their initial and continuing training and development, and on how committed and motivated they are.

The latter in turn depends on how satisfied they are with their conditions of service; how well-prepared they feel due to any training and/or professional development they have received, and how well-supported they feel by their school and district leaderships within the changing education policy context. In order to ensure that pupils receive good quality schooling, teachers have to be well-trained and well-motivated. Teachers who have to worry about their work and employment situations are less effective in helping children learn.

The research report includes recommendations for actions that government and civil society organisations could take to ameliorate some of the weaknesses in the quality of primary education, and to address concerns about a teaching force increasingly demotivated, with negative consequences on its effectiveness. It points to the desirability of initiatives that would enhance the professional competence, effectiveness and status of teachers. In outline, these are:

a) Restructuring the conditions of service so they provide more certain career prospects for contract teachers and more opportunities for professional development for all, and ensure better parity of teaching with other professions.

b) Establishing a viable system of teacher training that will place more emphasis on pedagogical skills and be sufficiently robust to provide a continuing basis of common experience for the next generation of new teachers; government proposals in this field are expected shortly.

c) Providing more systematic opportunities for in-service training for both established and contract teachers and for those without formal training, to enhance their professional competence and allow them to gain additional qualifications.

d) Developing arrangements that support newly appointed teachers, which will help minimise wastage, attract more women into the profession and help fill postings in remote rural areas.

e) Delivering housing for teachers, in line with the October 2010 government commitment.

f) Putting in place explicit arrangements to support women in the teaching profession.

The recommendations are set out in more detail in the full Teachers Talking research report.
VSO is a federation of member organisations that all contribute volunteers and resources from Canada, India, Ireland, Kenya, the Netherlands, the Philippines and the UK to fight poverty in 44 developing countries. VSO has education programmes in 15 countries. Volunteers support improvements in education by working in teacher training colleges and with schools on developing teaching methods. They also work within the mainstream education system to overcome the barriers to marginalised groups, for example, by improving policies relating to teachers and education information management systems and the provision of inclusive education in partnership with local and national government in areas such as assessment, strategic planning, national curriculum development, monitoring and evaluation, and national quality standards.

In addition to this publication, the following research may also be of interest (available from the VSO International website: www.vsointernational.org/valuingteachers):

- How Much is a Good Teacher Worth? A report of the motivation and morale of teachers in Ethiopia (2009)
- Learning From Listening: A policy report on Maldivian teachers’ attitudes to their own profession (2005)
- Lessons from the Classroom: Teachers’ motivation and perceptions in Nepal (2005)
- Listening to Teachers: The motivation and morale of education workers in Mozambique (2008)
- Making Teachers Count: A policy research report on Guyanese teachers’ attitudes to their own profession (2004)
- Teachers for All: What governments and donors should do (2006)
- Teacher Talking Time: A policy research report on Malawian teachers’ attitudes to their own profession (2002)
- Teachers’ Voice: A policy research report on teachers’ motivation and perceptions of their profession in Nigeria (2007)
- They’ve Got Class! A policy research report on Zambian teachers’ attitudes to their own profession (2001)
- Valuing School Leaders: An investigation into the constraints facing school leaders in their efforts to improve the quality of education in the Maldives (2009)