



Teachers Talking

Contributions of primary teachers to
the quality of education in Mozambique

Summary of key findings and recommendations

Key findings

The research report *Teachers Talking: Primary teachers' contributions to the quality of education in Mozambique (2011)*¹ investigates how and to what extent differences in Mozambican teachers' qualifications, training and conditions of service have an impact on the quality of primary education. The research concentrates on teachers in the public system of primary education in Mozambique. It is based on qualitative social research that was carried out among teachers and other education stakeholders in different regions and provinces of Mozambique between July and September 2010 using focus groups and semi-structured interviews².

Teachers Talking is part of VSO's Valuing Teachers advocacy initiative which supports the achievement of the Education for All goals and highlights the pivotal role that teachers play in the education reform process and in improving the quality of education.

Teacher shortages are an issue in many low-income countries as they try to meet the Millennium Development Goals and the Education for All objectives by 2015. Mozambique has employed untrained teachers and also makes extensive use of trained and untrained temporary 'contract' teachers. Other government responses to teacher shortages have been to 'fast-track' teacher training and to reduce the number of pupils repeating grades. As a result of these measures, no new untrained primary teachers have been contracted since 2009 - but in 2010 untrained teachers still made up 24 per cent of all primary teachers nationally³.

Qualifications and training of Mozambique's primary teachers

In Mozambique all teachers are 'qualified', that is they have obtained some education certificate (basic, medium or higher). Primary teachers' qualifications usually fall within the basic or medium level and this determines their pay. 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. Currently, trained and untrained teachers seem to work well alongside each other. Their working conditions are the same and there

is a semi-institutionalised system that sees trained teachers giving 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 receive⁴.

Teachers' conditions of service

There is an important distinction between teachers who are permanent civil servants and contract teachers who are on one-year contracts (generally renewable). The status of contract teacher is meant to be a temporary status: all teachers (trained and untrained) start off as contract teachers and all teachers are in principle eligible to become civil servants. But for many teachers, being on a 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 appear 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 constraints, as well as by bureaucracy. Many contract teachers find 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 them in terms of job security, pension rights, opportunities for participation in in-service training and opportunities for career progression. Contract teachers are not able to take on positions of leadership (for example as pedagogical or school directors) and there is an age limit for entering the civil service. As a result, some teachers' careers are permanently blighted.

A unified or a fragmented profession?

The distinctions between untrained teachers and differently trained teachers on the one hand and between civil servants and contract teachers on the other hand threaten to divide or fragment the profession. In addition they may increase the level of de-motivation among teachers, particularly as the criteria which enable some 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 professional commitment has potentially serious consequences for the processes of teaching and learning and hence for the quality of education.

The quality of primary education

The fieldwork explored the effect of the different teacher statuses, recent education reforms and other factors on educational quality. There is wide-spread concern that educational quality in Mozambique is actually declining rather than improving, a view that was expressed during the fieldwork by almost all the participants. Teachers' views on the main reasons for poor educational quality are (in order of the frequency with which they were mentioned):

- 'bad' interpretation of education policy (in particular of the 'semi-automatic' progression that was introduced with the new curriculum);
- 'inappropriate' education policies for Mozambique;
- lack of involvement of parents and local communities;
- lack of the material conditions for good teaching and learning (such as proper classrooms, desks, books, etc);
- lack of commitment from many teachers;
- many untrained or 'badly' trained teachers;
- few opportunities for continuing professional development for teachers ;
- Too many children per class.

When teachers were asked about the factors that they regard as important for good educational quality they particularly mentioned the following:

- 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.
- Parental and community involvement.

Teachers thus mentioned factors that can be affected by teachers' training, their conditions of service, their working conditions and their general social context. Teachers also mentioned other factors that would help to improve educational quality, such as lower class sizes and better availability of teaching and learning materials. They also gave importance to gender parity among pupils and gender equity between teachers.

What can be done to improve educational quality?

The research explored each of the above factors in detail in focus groups with teachers and in interviews with other stakeholders. The research findings suggest that educational quality can improve when teachers:

- are well-qualified and trained with longer in-service training that emphasises pedagogy. The multitude of teacher training models has not helped to develop a well-prepared and cohesive teaching force; greater stability in training regimes is needed;
- are fully committed to the education policies that they are helping to implement. This requires better communication between education officials, school directors and teachers; more in-service training would also be helpful;
- have regular opportunities to participate in continuing professional development in order to upgrade their skills and knowledge. This makes them feel valued and appreciated for their contributions to education;
- are well rewarded and well regarded. The majority of teachers' salaries are low and lack some of the fringe benefits available to some other professional groups. Teachers and some 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;
- work in a supportive context that includes facilitative management at school, district and provincial education offices and where the physical context in which they work is supportive of teaching and learning, for example through the availability of desks and books. A supportive environment can do much to counter division and fragmentation and to help keep the teaching force unified.

To ensure that pupils receive good quality schooling, teachers have to be well-trained and well-motivated. Teachers who are worrying about their work and employment situations are not very effective in helping children learn.

¹ The full report will be available in print from June 2011. Please contact augusto.macicame@vsoint.org at VSO Mozambique if you would like to receive a copy in either Portuguese or in English.

² Twenty-nine focus groups were conducted and 254 teachers, 37 teacher trainers, 36 students at teacher training colleges and 19 members of school councils participated. Thirty-five semi-structured interviews were held with officials and members of governmental and non-governmental organisations.

³ MINISTÉRIO DA EDUCAÇÃO (2010) *Documento de Fundo para solicitar financiamento do Fundo Catalítico FTI*. Maputo: MINED

⁴ The 10+1 model provides one year of teacher training after 10 years of schooling.

⁵ The full report will be available in print from June 2011. Please contact augusto.macicame@vsoint.org at VSO Mozambique if you would like to receive a copy in either Portuguese or in English.

Recommendations

The full *Teachers Talking* research report includes recommendations for action that the Mozambican Government, civil society organisations and international donors could take to improve the quality of primary education and to address teachers' concerns. This research has pointed to a series of initiatives that would enhance the professional competence, effectiveness and status of teachers. In outline, these are:

- A.** restructuring the conditions of service so that they provide a predictable career path for contract teachers, 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 will be robust enough 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 any 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 decrease wastage and assist filling roles in remote rural areas;
- E.** delivering housing for teachers in line with the October 2010 government commitment;
- F.** putting in place explicit arrangements to attract women into the teaching profession and to support their development;
- G.** improving communications between all participants in education to ensure full awareness of developments in education, and in the professional opportunities available, and to monitor improvements in take up.

These recommendations aim to help consolidate the good progress that has already been achieved by the Mozambican Government towards a comprehensive primary education system of high quality.



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Published 2011

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