



The teaching sector relies primarily on the human resources it employs: on the one hand, the quality of the teachers' work significantly determines the quality of the educational services delivered; on the other hand, teachers' salaries by far account for the most important share of expenditure in this sector.

Introduction



These two facts most certainly make teacher matters the central element of current policies for the development of African education systems and the key to their expansion towards universal primary education (UPE) and eventually towards a cycle of basic education to incorporate lower secondary education.

However, there are many points to be clarified in order to establish a debate on teacher matters in Africa that will reflect the importance of the issues involved, over and above the poor knowledge of reality, distorted views, questions of principle and ideologies. The extent of the needs and the weight of financing constraints lead some to focus only on the financial aspect, as though the expansion of the education systems depended on the reduction of salary costs alone, at the risk of neglecting quality; for others, priority is given exclusively to quality, as though it depended on an ideal definition of teacher policy (level of recruitment, salaries, careers, working conditions, etc.), which is partly belied by the results of evaluations on the determining factors of learning and which does not take into account the constraints facing the countries. Neither of these positions is sustainable since each of them ignores what is relevant in the other. A teacher policy is absolutely essential for quality education and must be realistically defined with regard to enrolment needs and financing constraints.

The purpose of this study is to provide useful clarifications that will hopefully contribute to reconciling these artificially conflicting points of views and so facilitate the necessary dialogue for setting up teacher policies that address the continent's educational challenges.

The fact that the different elements of the debate are scattered at the present time, enables the most extreme points of view to rally only those who go along with their arguments. It is therefore important to assemble them and put them directly into perspective in a single document. Simplistic solutions cannot hold out against the simultaneous reminder of the staggering extent of the needs and the reality of the constraints, but also of the results of research. These highlight the need for all of the African countries to make progress in the area of learning quality while showing the limits of traditional solutions in terms of recruitment and initial training. They call for the exploration of new avenues.

The fact that the different elements of the debate are not always precise, fuels the lack of understanding of actual situations and of orders of magnitude. It is therefore appropriate to contribute to better defining them. How extensive are the needs in personnel connected to UPE? Can we seriously talk about teacher salaries *per se* without referring to the conditions offered to individuals with comparable academic levels in other civil service positions and more so in the private sector as required by the ILO/UNESCO 1966 recommendation¹? What do the different categories of “new” contract, temporary and community teachers, who already make up the majority of the teaching force in some countries, actually cover? In some cases, it consists in outsourcing an activity formerly carried out exclusively by civil servants, while in other cases the boundary with the original status is much less distinct.

¹ Cf. <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0012/001260/126086e.pdf>

The different elements of the debate are sometimes ideological: this study does not claim to totally do away with this aspect but does aim at focusing as far as possible on the factual elements. For example, it is no doubt important to recognise at the same time that while the private sector does not spontaneously fulfil collective goals, a public service can be provided by institutions and/or personnel who do not necessarily belong to the civil service. In the same way, hasty denunciation of the Education For All Fast Track Initiative (EFA-FTI) indicative framework (that may be interpreted as indicative, incentive, imperative...) on a specific point (teacher salaries, for example) leads to denying a sound analytical substrate; the latter is based on the notion of trade-offs under financing constraints, whereby the recommended level of salary reflects quantitative (enrolling more children with a view to reaching UPE) and qualitative (limiting class size, ensuring availability of funds for educational materials, in-service training, etc.) goals.

The question of trade-offs is precisely a key methodological element of the debate since it is at the centre of the antagonisms on the way teacher matters are handled. For some, implicitly, quality teaching is obtained by an ideal combination of factors and so by the concomitance of high levels of recruitment and of professional training for teachers, small class size, abundant allocation of educational materials, and effective pedagogical management and supervision. For others, the need to systematically take into account the constraints means thinking of allocations of the different factors in terms of substitution. In the interests of an effective educational policy, it is thus important to look for the combination of factors that guarantees the best quantitative and qualitative results, **for any conceivable level of resources.**

The analysis of the evaluation of devices and practices, although not enough, is thus a prerequisite for a dialogue on the question of teacher policies. The misunderstanding clearly stems from a different perception and usage of the results produced by these evaluations. These results confirm the remarks of actors in the field on the impact of each of the components of a teacher policy. They generally show that the quality of learning increases along with the level of recruitment of teachers and with the allocation of educational materials, particularly textbooks, and highlight the decrease of this learning with the rise in class size. Researchers concur from these results that the impact of these factors, according to their level of allocation, differs both in terms of intensity and of costs. By incorporating these results in constrained trade-offs that take into account the quantitative developments generated by the Dakar goals, researchers therefore arrive at different recommendations in terms of educational policy. Comparing the impact and costs of the different factors suggests, for example, that there is more to be gained at present, in both quantity and quality, in most African education systems, from giving priority to textbook allocations, reducing class size and improving pedagogical management and supervision than from raising the academic level of recruitment of teachers.

While it can be hoped that a sound technical analysis will clarify the debate, it cannot in itself constitute a policy. On the question of trade-offs, it is of course important to take into account the strong social dimension relayed by the teachers' unions in their often difficult dialogue with the ministries. While the main subject of this study is obviously not the analysis of the relations between trade union organisations and ministries of education, it will nevertheless attempt to report on the positions of both in order to shed light on recent developments and also to assess the realism of future reforms.

The study is divided into five chapters, each tackling a particular aspect of teacher matters in Africa, from the presentation of the context and constraints specific to African countries, through to the subjects of salary, status, quality and school and teacher management. While it is above all a matter of gathering together existing information in order to put it into perspective, the study does provide updates on several aspects for a direct contribution to the debate. Available information is however scarce and non-exhaustive. Much of it is not the subject of systematic collection and originates from sector diagnosis activities conducted in the countries².

The first Chapter is devoted to teacher needs in response to the emblematic goal of primary education for all set at the Dakar Forum in the year 2000. While teacher matters are the central topic of debates on education worldwide, they obviously take on a special dimension in Africa, and particularly in sub-Saharan Africa, faced with the challenge of UPE. The lag accumulated in terms of primary school education and the very heavy weight of demographic growth make teacher matters first and foremost a quantitative issue.

The analysis of teacher needs presented in this study uses school data and national demographic data from 41 African countries. The goal is for all children in each country to complete primary school³. The horizon defined for this goal varies depending upon each country's current situation in terms of primary completion. Thus, for those countries closest to the goal (6), achieving UPE is projected for 2010, while for those countries furthest behind, some of which have already pushed back the Dakar goal in their programme activities, achieving UPE is set at 2020 (20 countries). The horizon of 2015 is maintained for the other 15 countries.

Based on a variety of common present day assumptions about school organisation (pupil-teacher ratio, repetition, etc.) and on an attrition rate adapted to each country, the number of new teachers to be recruited in order to attain UPE in the 41 countries as a whole is estimated at around 2.4 million; this is close to the current total number of teachers, which is in the region of 2.9 million. At first sight, this objective may seem sustainable insofar as it corresponds to maintaining the same rate of recruitment as that observed in the recent period (2000-2005) for the vast majority of countries. However, the challenge is still very high in view of the singularity of this period, which corresponded to the introduction of aggressive policies for lowering teacher salary costs; these policies enabled an unprecedented increase in recruitments within the framework of an increase in national and international financing.

² Diagnostic studies mainly carried out with the support of the World Bank and/or the Pôle de Dakar education sector analysis, UNESCO-BREDA.

³ In technical terms, this means reaching a primary school completion rate of 100%.

The second Chapter deals with teacher salaries. In order to understand the origin and the singularity of recent salary policies, this chapter goes back over the central role of teacher salary issues in the framework of the educational policies (large share of domestic budgets, one of the elements of a global trade-off where choices are also determined in terms of pupil-teacher ratios, allocation of educational materials, administrative and pedagogical management of teachers, etc.) and strives to trace the joint evolution of teacher salaries and teacher recruitment in Africa.

The evolution of average teacher salaries in Africa in terms of wealth per capita over a relatively long period of time (1975-2005) is marked by a continual decline in French-speaking Africa where civil servant salaries were initially based on those in colonial Metropolitan France, and by a convergence with those in force in English-speaking Africa. The deterioration in the relative situation of teachers reflects the impact of structural adjustment policies on civil servant salaries over a large part of the period but has not however worked in favour of a massive increase in recruitments of new teachers. On the other hand, the decline of the average salaries observed over the most recent period (2000-2005), in the two main language areas, corresponds to the introduction of aggressive policies that have enabled a very significant increase in recruitments. In English-speaking Africa, the decrease in salary cost has been obtained mainly by resorting to less-trained teachers, while in French-speaking Africa it corresponds to the introduction of new status categories defined outside of the civil service. While satisfying the needs in new teachers for achieving UPE corresponds to maintaining the rhythm observed over this very recent period for many countries, the question is obviously raised as to the sustainability of these new salary policies and their consequences in economic, social and pedagogical terms. This chapter therefore intends to establish the current levels of teacher salaries according to the different status categories and looks into their capacity to attract people to the profession with a view to satisfying the needs in new teachers.

The third Chapter explores the content of these new teacher policies in more detail. Limited to the main lines in terms of teacher policy in Africa, the presentation of the second Chapter above may have given an impression of genuinely homogeneous situations within the two main language areas. In fact, there is a very wide variety of country situations and, in spite of common designations, of “new teacher” categories too. The third Chapter thus goes into more detail about the creation of these new teacher policies, as well as describing more precisely the multiplicity of solutions adopted by the countries. The introduction of community teachers, recruited and paid by the communities, was a sign of the pronounced demand for education from families during the periods of structural adjustment and opened the way for restructuring the teaching profession by questioning the traditional requirements in terms of initial and professional training and by fostering the creation of specific status categories, as covered in this chapter. A detailed exploration of the different situations reveals the heterogeneity of national responses and that of the teaching profession in each country in terms of professional profiles, status, salaries and careers. Although this dual heterogeneity has enabled noteworthy progress in terms of enrolments, genuine teacher policies are called for today.

The fourth Chapter explores the crucial issue of the teacher's role in the learning process. Protest in many countries over the massive recruitment of these new teachers concerns their status and salary conditions of course, but also the consequences on the quality of pupil learning. When acknowledging the teacher's central role in the learning process, the quality of his/her work can be readily associated with a well-defined professional profile (academic level, professional training, status, etc.). In this respect, the recruitment of new teachers who differ from their predecessors in all or part of these aspects raises the legitimate question of the impact of these new policies on pupil learning achievements. The results of research are necessary here in order to clarify the elements of a debate all too often limited to a confrontation of irreconcilable opinions. This chapter attempts to present as simply as possible what is known today of the impact of teachers' professional profiles on pupil learning achievements while highlighting the importance of going beyond this immediate appreciation in order to grasp the true complexity of the teacher's role in this process. Clearly, and contrary to generally accepted ideas, observable teacher characteristics, i.e. those managed by the education systems today, have little effect on pupil learning achievements. This is the case for the academic level at which teachers are recruited, where data do however show that a minimum threshold is to be respected; it is also the case for status and particularly for non-civil servant as opposed to civil servant status categories. These results do at least lead to recognising that these elements do not in themselves define the teachers' commitment to their activity. The way they perceive their position (as a promotion rather than a regression) may explain, for example, why some less qualified teachers obtain better results than others who are more qualified. Recognition of a class-effect independent of the teachers' professional characteristics highlights still further the complexity of the teachers' role in the learning process. This clearly challenges the administrative and pedagogical management of schools and classes while making it a key issue for the improvement of quality.

The fifth and final Chapter is devoted to putting the different aspects of teacher matters into perspective. The teacher policies urgently set up as of the year 2000 have frequently been criticised for their shortcomings in terms of recruitment, training and career prospects. This chapter goes over the different practical aspects of a teacher policy in order to identify possible room for improvement but also to provide a general overview of the situation. The lowering of academic levels for recruitment and/or the shortening of the duration of professional training, and even the absence of training in some cases, are the most frequently criticised points. Some results from Chapter 4 are referred to again here in order to discuss these two aspects, the goal being clearly to ensure adequate professional training for all teachers. The deployment of teachers in schools is another, less tackled, but very worrying, management problem in many African countries. Some countries do however perform satisfactorily in this area, which shows that there are ways of improving teacher allocation to schools. Finally, one of the challenges faced by teacher policies in the coming years is that of maintaining competent and motivated teachers in the education systems. Available data show that the problem

of motivation should not be underestimated. Local dynamics at school level can prove important for managing this problem, which implies giving thought to the management of teams of teachers. It also requires the definition of coherent policies in terms of career prospects to enable each teacher, whatever his/her original status, to have a clear vision of the career prospects open to him/her.

The different chapters in this study provide a glimpse of just how acute teacher issues are in Africa today due to the very strong constraints weighing on the educational goal the countries have set themselves in order to break with the situation of underdevelopment. In most African countries, the transition to mass education is in many cases incompatible with the former teacher recruitment and salary model. Contrary to what has been observed in countries elsewhere where initial conditions were more favourable (lower salary levels, priority given successively to the different levels of education in phase with economic needs, etc.), breaking with the inherited model is an essential condition for achieving the ambitious goals set for the education systems. This inevitably distressing and confrontational break must be explained in order for it to be socially acceptable, and above all it must be part of a coherent overall policy. This coherence concerns primarily the teacher policy itself, which cannot be limited to recruiting less costly alternatives than the permanent teachers already employed. It also concerns incorporating the teacher policy in the more global trade-off necessary for achieving quality mass education.