

Chapter 4

Conclusions and Recommendations

Ensuring equitable, quality teacher deployment is clearly a challenge for countries, and particularly so for those undergoing expansion and re-structuring of their education systems. As demonstrated in the situational analysis, one of the first challenges for each of the country case studies is the dual responsibility of increasing teacher numbers as means of increasing access to education for the large numbers of children still out of school, coupled with the need for appropriate measures that will prevent an exacerbation of the regional and gendered deployment imbalances that already exist.

It was primarily for this reason that the four case studies were chosen: all had low net enrolment ratios and were looking towards the mammoth task of putting large numbers of children into school by 2015. Two of the countries – Nigeria and Pakistan – account for a significant number of children who are out of school in the Commonwealth. One of the countries in particular – Tanzania – has had its teaching population quite severely affected by the prevalence of HIV/AIDS. In contrast to the other cases, PNG was actually displaying regressive indicators in terms of enrolment at the time of the study. Several strong similarities came through in the situational analysis, which suggest issues of teacher deployment are universal in developing countries. Although pan-Commonwealth and quite different in terms of national contexts, some prominent trends were clearly validated.

The rural/urban divide is a deep-seated and complex problem that is caused by the integral factors of both teacher reluctance in rural deployment, and insufficient government policies, processes and infrastructure to address the issue. The inequalities regarding gender are an inseparable aspect of this challenge, and it needs to be clearly stated and understood that women teachers are the key issue in improving rural teacher intakes, and vice versa. Allied to all this again are the quality imbalances that weave through each of the challenges already discussed, with rural areas and women teachers (particularly in rural areas) generally suffering from the lowest

quality indicators in terms of minimum standard teaching qualifications and advanced diplomas and degrees.

One of the concerns this book has brought to the fore is that there is still the need for a more developed, concerted policy approach to teacher deployment. Most such policies lack cohesion, and in some cases are open to contradictions that make implementation confusing, particularly at the devolved district levels where clear understanding of policy papers is absent and/or capacity to carry out those policies has yet to be fully developed following devolution. Some recommendations for addressing this issue could include educational reforms, sector development plans and decentralisation of management of the education system and devolution of power and authority at provincial, district and local levels of government, putting a premium on strengthening management at all levels for delivery of education services. In principle, this should provide more effective teacher deployment. However, it is evident that many players involved in making key deployment decisions at different levels can create blockages in the efficiency of identifying and solving deployment concerns at the community level. There is also sometimes a variance in their understanding of roles and responsibilities.

Understanding that the issues affecting teacher deployment are multiple, this book nonetheless now offers some recommendations for policy-makers and planners that attempt to address some of the more universal barriers hindering effective teacher deployment, despite various approaches in the form of primary sector policy papers and decentralisation.

Recommendations

Clear, well-informed and inclusive policies

There need to be well-written policies on recruitment and deployment of teachers. At present the countries studied each have provisos that acknowledge the need for more teachers as a whole and better deployment practices. However, national plans are vague on what the mechanics of these processes will be. Additionally, despite varying degrees of centralisation, these policies are rarely defined and articulated with a 'bottom-up' approach. Although it needs to be addressed from an education management perspective, the challenge for teacher deployment in rural and remote schools should also be seen in the broader context of the urban and rural divide with regard to the quality of life of the people who live in those areas. For example, while many countries may stipulate a pupil-teacher ratio of either

40:1 or 45:1 as a policy goal, they rarely address the possibility that a school with a good pupil-teacher ratio may only have one female teacher. Such intricacies need to be clearly addressed at the policy level first, rather than being a late discovery once implementation has been attempted. Study and research should be conducted to assess the extent of problems in rural areas, and the effectiveness of past policy measures and incentives in resolving teacher deployment problems. These should form part of the foundation for future policy documents.

A focused approach to the education and recruitment of female teachers

Female teachers need to be mainstreamed throughout all policy papers, planning papers and at each level of institutional authority more effectively. This must follow a clear understanding of what the gender dynamics are. For example, simply stating that it is desirable to have 50 per cent female teachers in a certain region in five years' time is not enough. This must be coupled with the corresponding targeted teacher-education initiatives tailored to the specificities of that area, which will encourage more young female graduates into the teaching profession. Similarly, teacher incentives must be articulated with an understanding of the desired effect they will have on female teachers. Finally, at the bureaucratic level, the process of advertisement for and recruitment of teachers also needs to be able to respond fully to gender needs at the district and school levels.

Addressing major country-specific deployment barriers

While gender and rural/urban divides are universal concerns that need to drive the formulation of effective deployment policy, other nation-specific factors that contribute to the teacher deployment problem must also be identified and effectively planned for at the policy and implementation levels. This could take the form of PNG's example of identifying 'disadvantaged' schools. More specifically, the death rate due to HIV/AIDS – primarily in Tanzania in the present study – and ineffectiveness at work due to the illness is a serious problem, as is an increasingly high turnover of teachers due to resignation or refusal to report to work in districts severely affected. Such districts need to be identified and planned-for separately at both the national and local levels, to ensure sufficient planning focus and the necessary resources reach the right areas.

Effective decentralisation

Even where policies do exist, translation of these into practice is another matter. Despite efforts towards decentralisation, there is still the need for more involvement by local governments in important decisions such as recruiting teachers, and several countries need to actually make this explicit within their policy documents. Recommendations in this respect include the need for:

- *Clearer designations of authority.* Decentralisation is supposed to give more power to local education authorities to make important decisions. However, data from this study have illustrated that this has not always been the case. For example, in some cases local education managers are responsible for the placement of teachers, while not being responsible for the creation of posts or recruitment. This lack of authority at the district level adversely affects teacher recruitment in that teachers cannot be recruited in a timely manner as and when the need arises. Education policies and practices need to be made open and as transparent as possible. Bureaucratic and hierarchical tendencies create more confusion for education managers, and there has also been confusion regarding what local authorities can and cannot do. Thus, it is necessary to clarify the role and responsibilities of local authorities and empower them to make decisions related to teacher deployment.
- *Transparency and communication.* It is important to communicate policies and procedures to every level of the education system. Few teachers and lower-management staff have ever seen those policy documents that do exist. They have come to know about them through oral communication or through trainings. This leads to confusion and hinders management from taking decisions on firm grounds. It is hoped that better communication strategies will lead to better understanding of the education system and informed decisions.
- *Building capacity.* District and local authority positions need to be filled by qualified staff and supported with resources. Key challenges that prevent qualified teachers from wanting to accept rural postings, such as late payment of salaries, are dependent on the increased capacity of administrative staff to manage financial systems and other relevant processes.

- Similarly, district and local education authorities should become more active in monitoring the performance of teachers and responding to needs where relevant. They should ensure regular visits by inspectors to schools at least once a year, with compulsory inspection to remote schools. District education agencies may share some of the roles and responsibilities assigned to inspectors. Appropriate monitoring tools need to be developed, to be used by education agencies at all levels, and specialist and administrative training should be provided to district/local education authorities, inspectors and head teachers to be more effective in supporting and monitoring teachers' performance.

Implementing transparent and objective deployment criteria / quota and reservation systems

Political influencing and nepotism in teacher placement and transfer has emerged as an important challenge for teacher deployment. Political transfers create imbalance in the student-teacher ratio in schools. The recruitment process needs to be streamlined and quality should supersede the other criteria of selection and recruitment. Some strong steps need to be taken to minimise such influences and practices, which can only happen through the will of the parties and change from within. Under devolved/decentralised plans, another tier of political influence has been created at the local level; therefore, it becomes all the more important to change attitudes overall.

Raising standard in pre-service and in-service teacher training

The need to increase the number qualified teachers is a major concern, but ensuring diploma teachers and graduates focus on primary school training is also necessary. There is an urgent need to produce graduate teachers specially trained to teach pre-primary and primary school, instead of making graduates a luxury in the teaching profession, deployed to secondary schools only. This approach is tied to the need for a more concerted government approach in raising the reputation of teaching.

The policy of relaxation of qualifications – such as that for employing female teachers in Pakistan – may bear immediate results in terms of participation of female teachers being enhanced in rural areas. However, in the long run the policy of qualification relaxation may have negative affect: teachers with poorer qualifications may not be able to offer quality education, and stratification between urban and rural school students' learning

will further widen. Thus, it is suggested that these rural teachers are provided with intensive in-service professional training and support, using ODL methods if appropriate.

Targeted training and recruitment

Current policies of government hiring local teachers need to be strengthened by providing extra training and incentives (for example, subsidised housing and travel allowances etc.) for rural areas. This becomes all the more important due to the lack of quality teachers and reluctance of urban teachers to take posts in rural schools. It also allows for the provision of trained mother-tongue teachers who understand the cultural norms and values of a particular locale, and minimises the risk of transfer requests. This approach overall is the key recommendation for addressing teacher deployment imbalances in the long term, and is one that government policy must recognise and commit to in terms of facilitation through both increased resources and de facto localised decision-making. More pointedly:

- All countries need to pursue a vigorous policy of training and recruiting indigenous female teachers from rural and marginalised communities (such as nomadic groups). Specialist schools aimed at streaming young girls into the teaching profession should be established. These can be attached as necessary to regional institutes/academic centres for the provision of guidance and curriculum. These will need to be heavily subsidised by government, donors or both as required.
- Targeted recruitment initiatives should also be complemented by the delivery of training at remote locations through the distance mode. Study through the distance mode will enable target teachers to receive training without their having to leave rural and remote areas. This can reduce the tendency of teachers to seek urban postings and will help to develop a core, stable teaching workforce in rural and remote areas.

Teacher incentives

Teacher incentives are a crucial strategy in alleviating the overall teacher shortage being experienced by developing countries. A fall in the status of the teaching profession, coupled with low teacher morale has led to lower intakes into teacher colleges overall, and this has been most strongly felt by

the primary school sector. However, teacher incentives acquire a more urgent slant when put into the context of the teacher deployment imbalances that clearly exist at the sub-national level. Recommendations therefore include both general primary teacher incentives and those targeted specifically for recruiting to understaffed areas. As already noted under targeted training and recruitment, the success of those earlier recommendations can only be effective through the supplementary practice of competitive teacher incentives so that more teachers are willing to remain in/be located to rural areas. The need for incentives is particularly relevant for encouraging qualified female teachers.

Primary teachers' salaries need to be competitive, and while it may not be possible to equalise a primary teacher's pay with that of a secondary teacher's, the shortfall must be narrowed significantly in order to make the sub-sector more appealing to potential graduates. As an extension of this, there should be a uniform career ladder for primary teachers providing them with motives to perform well and excel.

More specifically, incentives should be reviewed to compensate appropriately the advantages of urban postings. This can take the form of additional stipends and allowances to compensate for difficulties encountered in rural and remote areas in terms of housing and travel.

In order to achieve successful delivery of such incentives, administrative processes and procedures need to be developed to reward rural school teachers in terms of promotion, training opportunities and the payment of financial incentives on time. A mechanism needs to be found for district/local government treasuries to facilitate efficient salary disbursement to minimise absenteeism and loss of teaching time.

Improved housing, water and sanitation facilities need to be created in rural and remote areas for teachers. As a further incentive, it could be useful to consider joint ownership schemes for housing between teachers and local education authorities to ensure future security for teachers once they retire. Further facilities such as childcare provision would also be a strong incentive for female teachers, although admittedly this would require substantial resources that many local communities would find it difficult to provide.

Even with the provision of stipends and allowances to compensate for travel expenses, it is worthwhile for governments to consider additional travel incentives, such as regular subsidised buses, or the distribution of bicycles among rural teaching staff.

Teacher utilisation

While multigrade teaching and shift teaching are effective methods for maximising the use of teachers in remote schools while deployment imbalances persist, these methods must remain compensatory strategies in times of need. Multigrade, for example, should ideally be envisioned in the longer term in schools with small numbers of children only. However, it is still imperative that teachers in a multigrade teaching school should be well trained and supported with sufficient materials for effective teaching. Policies also need to be in place for compensating multigrade teaching through appropriate benefits, and this should be determined by teaching load.

However, it is also understood that the above recommendations, like those before them, will require concerted political will on the part of government and other stakeholders. The need for increased resources is an obvious yet key test in this, which will be required for most of the recommendations above. This will be felt most strongly in the areas of targeted training and recruitment and teacher incentives, but is ultimately unavoidable if quality, motivated teachers are to be trained and deployed successfully. Finally, although as a concrete recommendation it would be difficult to carry out successfully, the challenge of rural teacher deployment must be viewed within the broader contexts of the quality of life of the people who live in those areas. From this perspective, ministries and departments of education cannot be expected to bear the burden alone, and ultimately improved standards of living, which play an important part in the retention of teachers in rural areas, will also be reliant on improved policies and practices by other government organs. Strategies such as housing and travel may therefore benefit from increased collaboration with other relevant government departments.