



Adamawa Primary Education Research

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



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1. BACKGROUND

Nigeria reportedly has the largest number of children not enrolled in school in the world, with girls comprising the larger proportion by far (UNESCO, 2012). Analysis of school enrolments across Nigeria shows considerable variation with northern states showing significantly higher proportions of children not in school compared to those in the south (NPC and RTI International, 2011). Within the north, the North East Zone, including Adamawa State, has the lowest enrolment – with over 50% of girls not in school (Akyeampong *et al.*, 2009). This snapshot of data alone points to the significant challenges for Nigeria, and for Adamawa State in particular, in achieving the MDGs and EFA goals.

While research from other countries and other Nigerian States suggests a wide range of factors affecting the uptake of quality education, there is a paucity of empirical research that explores the particularities of the current situation in Adamawa State. It is within this context that the Adamawa State Basic Education Board (ADSUBEB) commissioned this preliminary research into access, quality and outcomes of basic education with specific reference to gender, to understand and inform approaches to address the specific educational needs of children and communities in Adamawa. While the original aim was to include all basic education, in the end it was decided to limit the research focus to primary education.

2. THE RESEARCH

2.1 Research aim

To conduct a preliminary exploration of access, quality and outcomes in Adamawa State primary schools with specific reference to gender.

2.2 Research objectives

1. To provide profiles of selected case study schools.
2. To provide illuminative, qualitative data and textured knowledge about school practices and processes highlighting gender.
3. To develop multiple stakeholder (pupils, parents, teachers, head teachers, Local Government Education Authority (LGEA) officers and community members) perspectives on improving school access and quality for girls.
4. To develop theoretical insights into the social and institutional processes related to the schooling of girls and boys.
5. To disseminate research findings through reports, conference papers and workshops.
6. To enhance local data management and research capacity.
7. To provide ADSUBEB with an evidence base to inform policy and intervention and for future monitoring purposes.

2.3 Research questions

1. What is the overall relationship between gender, access, retention and outcomes in primary education within Adamawa State?
2. What is the relationship between gender, access, retention and outcomes in each case study school?
3. What evidence is there in the schools of the differential treatment of girls and other social groups (religious/ethnic/ lifestyle)?
4. What evidence is there in the informal daily life of the schools of the differential treatment of girls and other social groups (religious/ethnic/ lifestyle)?
5. To what extent, and in what ways, do the pupils, teachers and head teachers view the experiences of schooling as equitable or inequitable (as regards gender/ethnicity/

- religion/ lifestyle)? What relationships do they see between the experiences of schooling and access, dropout and examination outcomes?
6. What is the broader social and economic profile of the community in each case study?
 7. What are the official structures and processes of community engagement in the school? What informal processes are in place? How is community involvement gendered?
 8. What kinds of impact has community involvement had on the school?
 9. What do community members and LGEA officers think are the key developmental priorities for the school? How do they explain school access, retention and examination outcomes records? What do they think the school might improve?
 10. How do school teaching staff, the community and LGEA officers work together to address issues of access, quality and gender in the case study schools?

2.4 Research strategy

The primary purpose of the proposed research was to explore and provide evidence on access to, and the quality of, primary education in Adamawa State. Six school case studies were a central feature of this research. These in-depth ethnographic-style school-based empirical studies explored schools and classrooms and heard the views of the multiple local stakeholders from the LGEAs, the schools and communities. A literature review, explorations of the available quantitative data at national, state, LGEA and school levels, as well a series of supplementary state-level interviews, were incorporated into the research design and included as data for analysis.

A phased and collaborative approach was taken to the research. The collaboration between external researchers, local researchers and a research steering committee offered opportunities for negotiated development, quality control and research capacity development. The collective development of research instruments, data collection, analysis and writing were all elements of the research capacity development, which was an important secondary structure of the research strategy and an explicit research objective.

2.5 Research analysis

The data collected through this case study research brought together multiple perspectives around the complex and overlapping concerns elaborated in Section 2.3 above. These were organised and collated by stakeholder groups (teachers, pupils, etc.) and by case study school (see appendices). Following the compilation of case study reports, the team engaged in cross-case study analysis using analytical grids (see Appendix II) to enable greater levels of generality, which comprise the main findings of the research. In broad terms the cross-case analysis distinguished three sets of stakeholder groups, educational administration, schools, communities, and highlighted the communications and relationships between these stakeholder groups (e.g. between schools and communities) and, where possible, the relationships and processes within each (e.g. in schools between heads and teachers, teachers and pupils etc.). This stakeholder analysis was structured around the four broad themes listed below, which relate directly to the main research aim:

- **Access** (admission, attendance, dropout, retention & educational quality)
- **In-school factors** (conditions, relationships, experiences)
- **Out-of-school factors** (conditions & relationships in home/community)
- **Identities** (gender/religious/ethnic/linguistic/age/lifestyle)

It is from our analysis of the intersection of the stakeholder groups and the key themes that the main findings of the research emerged.

3. MAIN FINDINGS

3.1 Introduction

The purpose of this section is to distil the main findings from the research and provide highlights that may be informative for future policy, practice and intervention, to improve access, quality and outcomes of education with special attention to gender. It is important to point out that the research focused only on primary education and did not explore early childhood provision, junior secondary schooling or teacher education.

The findings presented below are the highlights from the research, which are elaborated on both in the six case studies in Appendix I, as well as within Chapters 4–9 of the main research report. We therefore recommend reading the whole report and the case studies as a means to recover some of the detail of the social complexities of schools and communities that are the context in which educational development in Adamawa has, and will take place.

In our critical engagement with the research into the multiple aspects of primary provision, however, we have not attempted to gloss over or hide the many challenges that face educational development in Adamawa. On the contrary, in this report we have attempted to lay out evidence and analysis to provide the best basis to understand what is going on and what this means for the educational rights of all children. Only with this information can the many committed educators in Adamawa rise to these challenges and make marked improvements that will have real effects.

Finally, it is important to acknowledge that this empirical inquiry and report are only part of an educational journey that began on an upward trajectory some time ago and in recent years has been accelerated. The efforts of ADSUBEB have already heightened awareness of the value of education, and have had profound effects on the provision of infrastructure and resources, on the quality of teachers, schools and administration, and, importantly, on widening access to education and on the delivery of human rights. Congratulations should be offered for these significant accomplishments, tempered by the awareness that there is still much that remains to be done.

3.2 Educational governance

State policy provides the primary guidance for educational practice and development and therefore needs to be informed by high-quality data and evidence from the multiple institutions and processes that together provide educational services. Research and evidence in Adamawa, however, is limited. The use of **information systems** is under-developed and needs upgrading in terms of data gathering, data accuracy, data processing and reporting. A year-on-year systematic analysis is an essential basis for policy development as well as for monitoring and evaluating their impacts. The inadequate information system straddles macro-level data handling and reporting to school-level record-keeping. Evidence from this research indicates that in many cases head teacher capacity to complete data returns was limited. This becomes a significant barrier to the production of positive strategies for school development and a threat to data quality and macro-level planning as school returns feed into LGEA and state data sets.

School governance arrangements are vital for addressing quality and equality in educational service provision in Adamawa State. The evidence from this research suggests that **systems of educational governance** across the state need to be improved and revitalised. The development of a transparent, responsive and accountable system of school governance is a high priority in the face of reported political interference that has worked to disrupt accountability relations and in turn skewed the due acquisition of both professional position and resources. Trust in the letter

of policy documents is low and linked to reported poor levels of professionalism in the administrative and educational hierarchy, resulting in the effective absence of an objective set of processes, rewards and disciplinary procedures. Various respondents across the board conveyed a desire to see educational governance move out of the realm of personal influence towards one of professional practice.

Evidence from this research suggests that in places the **communications** through the system are not working well and that **accountability** chains are broken. A lack of communication may in turn endanger the implementation of positive policy initiatives e.g. the free provision of textbooks and uniforms. At the same time, poor communications produce gaps in accountability chains in which, intentionally or not, educational personnel may neither carry out their responsibilities nor be held accountable for dereliction of duty. Formal systems to gauge accountabilities in relation to specific duties, or as part of a cyclical monitoring process, are not systematically operationalized.

Teacher appointment and deployment processes, although clearly documented, are neither clear nor transparent. The patterns and processes of teacher appointment, professional development and promotion are not closely monitored nor used to inform strategies that ensure fairer distribution and greater equity across and within the profession and administration. The evidence indicates a specific **gender** dynamic in these processes which demands focused policy and practice attention. In addition, there are evident differences between urban and rural teacher deployment that could also be usefully factored into strategic development around teacher deployment and career development.

Educational decentralisation needs to be further developed and supported. It has been unevenly implemented and communications between schools, communities and educational administration are often weak or antagonistic. The radical changes entailed in shifting towards more local management of schools should not be under-estimated. Ambiguities around the operation of SBMCs and PTAs and issues of representation and voice within them need to be addressed and responsibilities of the stakeholder bodies, communications to other stakeholder and accountabilities need to be made clear. These are complex social and cultural changes that need greater support on the ground.

School and teacher support systems tended to be weak and uneven despite the need for them, especially with respect to school–community relations, teacher professional development and teaching quality. The important relationship between quality and access has been highlighted in this research and the evidence suggests it is in need of concerted and coherent attention. Active teacher support to work towards more pupil-centred teaching and learning, for example, was not widely evident within or outside the schools. Similarly, systems to support school development were operationally weak. Systems of teacher and school reward for quality improvements as a means to encourage continuing professional development (CPD) were strikingly absent.

Educational administration has a responsibility for ensuring **equity** both in terms of the educational services it supports and as an employer. Whilst acknowledging certain gains and key equality champions, there appeared to be limited consensus, knowledge or understanding of the depth, breadth and complexity of the issues. For example, the research evidence indicates that gender stereotypes prevail to limit the educational opportunities of all children and there is a skewed gender representation of teachers, heads and officers on PTAs, SBMCs, LGEAs and ADSUBEB. Equality monitoring systems (for gender and other disadvantaged groups) and practices were not in evidence.

3.3 Infrastructure

School infrastructure has an important bearing on issues of educational access, retention and quality. When schools are close to communities and families, access and retention in school is enabled. Those pupils who live furthest from school tend to start late and remain at risk of drop out. **Distance to school** has heightened significance for girls as concerns for their safety going to and from school have been found to be major reasons for not sending girls to school.

The appearance and **quality of school buildings** underline the importance of education in their localities and many stakeholders said they took pride in their schools. The buildings are the working conditions for teachers work and significant to their morale. It was obvious that focused efforts had been made to improve school infrastructure in some schools. This was greatly appreciated by respondents. However, the quality and finishing of buildings was sometimes disappointing, suggesting that commissioning processes and quality control measures need to be tightened. Debris and materials left after building work sometimes constrained the space outside classrooms, which along with sufficient shade and play equipment for play, were highlighted by respondents as important to children's positive experiences in school.

The building and refurbishment of schools evidently has been a high priority. Of necessity the ongoing building programme has been incremental; however, a systematic and equitable process in the selection of sites for building development has been less clear. The distrust and disaffection caused by the absence of more **explicit criteria, processes and practices** have a negative influence on those trying hard to improve educational access and opportunities in their communities.

Local disputes over land, water and roads around, and even through schools exemplified the apparent **mis-communication and lack of consultation** between schools, communities and educational administration staff. In the wider context of decentralisation, communications and consultation form an essential part of achieving consensus over infrastructural development and provide a means to strengthen school–community cohesion in ways that have the potential to increase school access and improve conditions and educational quality.

There was widespread evidence of successful **community mobilisation** involving ABSUBEB, LGEA, school and community leaders. However, there was also evidence that these efforts were undermined when infrastructural development (or teacher supply) could not keep pace with the increase in enrolments. There was, for example, evident overcrowding in some classes and many classes continued to be taught outside buildings and under shade. Such issues clearly negatively affected educational quality, reduced learning opportunities in school, and ultimately raised concerns about the value of attending school. In the longer term, access and retention may be threatened, especially in poor communities where child labour is in demand to sustain family life.

Pupil and teacher safety within school are vital for sustained access and educational quality with particular implications for parental trust in relation to girls. There is evidently a need to demarcate and secure school compounds with fences, gates and personnel – in consultation with communities – and to monitor those who enter and leave as in many cases **schools were vulnerable to encroachment** from outsiders during school and after hours.

The **basic amenities of water and toilets** were often absent or in poor condition, even though they constitute a fundamental part of school infrastructure. The lack of these amenities is detrimental to the health and wellbeing of pupils and teachers and was found to be a cause of truancy and absenteeism. The negative implications are higher for female pupils and teachers, who require greater privacy in usual circumstances and particularly during menstruation. The

inclusion of basic amenities has the potential to link to **health education**, especially as this and other research in Nigeria have shown ill health to be a significant threat to school access. Addressing issues around toilet use, basic hygiene and communicable diseases for pupils, communities and teachers could facilitate a cleaner safer environment which has the potential to reduce drop out associated with pupil and family illness and girls reaching puberty.

3.4 Teacher management

Gender differences in teacher appointments, promotions, deployment and in school responsibilities was widespread. For example there were fewer qualified female teachers in Adamawa State, substantial differences between male and female teachers in some LGEAs, and low numbers of female head teachers.

There were evident **disparities in staffing between urban and rural schools**. In the rural case study schools there were fewer qualified teachers and fewer female teachers. These inequities in teacher deployment, which place pupils in rural schools at a disadvantage, have reportedly begun to be addressed in a couple of the LGEAs although initiatives were in their early stages and had yet to be evaluated.

Appointments and promotions at school- and LGEA-level were reported to be subject to **political interference**. This was found to impact negatively on the capacity of certain appointees to manage schools and teachers with knock-on effects on staff morale, trust, working relations, and ultimately on school quality. Within schools there was some evidence that teacher responsibilities were allocated on merit but these were frequently **gender stereotyped**. Issues of gender equity and staff responsibilities are an important aspect of the management of teachers, as well as being significant to teacher career progression.

Teachers were overwhelmingly dissatisfied with their **pay and conditions**; in particular, low pay, delayed payments, lack of duty allowances (e.g. for head teachers) and opportunities for promotion clearly affected teacher morale, commitment and professionalism, which in turn adversely affected educational quality (e.g. through teacher absenteeism). The **low morale** of teachers and the quality of their teaching were exacerbated in many cases by poor classroom conditions and lack of teaching materials. Although official data indicate that primary class sizes comply with national recommendations (35:1) case study evidence suggests severe overcrowding in some cases due to a combination of a lack of classroom space and/or staff shortages and/or teacher absenteeism. The threats that poor teacher pay and conditions and low teacher morale pose to educational quality were evident.

Administrative and in-school **support for teachers** tended to be rather bureaucratic in nature and variable in frequency across the case study schools and LGEAs. There was only limited evidence of assisting teachers with pedagogy or content (e.g. LGEA-sponsored workshops on use of teaching aids), or the inclusion of head teachers in school-based teaching quality or professional development activities. Similarly, support for head teachers in managing staff or communicating with the community was not in evidence. In-service training courses and workshops were available but their limitations in effecting change in classroom practice were recognised. There was no evidence of systematic monitoring and evaluation of teacher professional development workshops or programmes.

In the face of increased numbers of qualified teachers in the state, many stakeholders recognised the sustained need to enhance teaching quality and the wider need to **improve and revise the teacher education system**. Suggested changes include involving more practical, school-based professional development, diagnostic activities, and bringing in outside expertise.

Teacher professionalism remained a key concern within the case study schools and LGEAs. Specific issues included teacher absenteeism, excessive use of corporal punishment and/or not covering parts of the syllabus. These all negatively influenced educational quality, pupil enrolment, punctuality, attendance, retention and performance. While some progress has been made in addressing teacher pay, conditions and incentives, there was a striking absence of in-school or head teacher-led strategies to address teacher professionalism. Associated with this, teacher discipline and accountability procedures were limited and tended to be implemented in an ad hoc rather than systematic way. The implications of poor teacher discipline by some male teachers for girls were highlighted by some stakeholders, but rarely by respondents within the case study schools.

3.5 Pupil management

The **costs** of school attendance negatively affected school access, especially for children from the most impoverished families. Although there are regulations regarding fees and levies, there were indications that in some cases these were exceeded and further unsanctioned fees were being demanded by schools. In some cases, the policies of free uniform and improved textbook provision in schools, introduced to alleviate the costs of schooling, had not been properly implemented. There was evident need to monitor school fee demands and ensure the timely distribution of uniform and books, as these are key to improved and sustained school access.

In general, the **school organisation was rather unsympathetic** to the demands of pupils' lives outside school, such that pupils were often subject to corporal punishment or temporary exclusion if their parents had not paid levies or provided writing materials, or for late-coming, absenteeism, or failure in their school cleaning duties, or in personal appearance and neatness. The research evidence showed that this school disposition discouraged access, and in the longer term, could lead to pupil absenteeism and/or dropout.

The proportion of the **school timetable** allocated to teaching and learning varied dramatically among schools and in many cases considerable time was spent by pupils on cleaning, assembly and other labour tasks. In one case as little as 2hrs 35mins was timetabled for classroom teaching and learning, which in practice left very little time devoted to learning. Enrolment, attendance and learning could all be enhanced with an improved balance between class time and cleaning/administration time, alongside a school organisation more tailored to fit with community lifestyle demands (e.g. household needs, farming duties, Qur'anic schooling).

Pupils were managed in highly authoritarian ways in schools characterised by a clear gender hierarchy. **Corporal and other physical punishment** and manual labour played a central role. The widespread and often unregulated use of corporal punishment by teachers and prefects was reported by pupils as having a strong negative effect on learning quality, and on school access and retention. Where alternatives to corporal punishment were used these generally involved physical discomfort, humiliation and/or entailed the pupil missing lessons. There was little evidence of efforts to develop disciplinary systems or practices that respected pupil dignity and did not deprive them of learning time.

The **prefect and monitor system** was highly gendered in terms of appointment and duties. Prefects were used predominantly for disciplinary purposes although there was one example in which the punitive discipline function was transformed towards a more supportive and pastoral function through the appointment of 'health prefects'. This highlights the potential to reconceptualise the prefect system towards one that could positively help to improve school quality and pupil retention. The use of the prefect system as a form of pupil representation,

however, was absent even when this is required by government for the composition of the SBMC.

Beyond intervening in matters of physical violence and theft there was very little teacher intervention in **pupil peer relations**. The effective tolerance of various forms of “teasing”, verbal harassment and bullying had a significant negative effect on pupil experiences in school and in turn on their concentration, participation, attendance and dropout. These negative impacts were experienced more acutely by girls and overage pupils. The absence of teacher intervention contradicts the teacher’s duty of care for their pupils. In a similar way, good **teacher-pupil relationships** are central to positive experiences in school for both teachers and pupils and have been related to improved motivation, access, retention, learning quality and outcomes. Although there were a few examples of individual teachers showing personal concern for the welfare of certain individual pupils, by lending them stationery or making home visits when they were absent, for example, in general across the case study schools, teachers remained rather authoritarian and distant. There were very few opportunities for less formal interaction with pupils, for example, in extra-curricular activities although one school reported involving staff in after-school games activities with pupils.

3.6 Teaching and learning

Classroom conditions are critical to improvements in school and learning quality. Dry, bright, well-built classrooms with sufficient benches and desks and a teacher-pupil ratio close to the government recommended ratio of 1:35 are conducive to learning and help to motivate teachers and pupils to strive for improved educational quality. In several of the schools significant strides had been made in this regard, thanks to ADSUBEB’s recent infrastructural development programme. However, where these conditions were not achieved, it was detrimental to both pupils’ and teachers’ experiences of schooling and to educational quality.

As highlighted in Section 3.3, increases in enrolments have overtaken the pace of infrastructural development such that many classes take place under shade or have become **overcrowded** with insufficient and poor quality furniture for pupils. These are significant threats to educational quality, which in turn lead to pupil absenteeism and eventual dropout, thereby undermining the state’s efforts at social mobilisation.

Improvements in **textbook provision** were widely reported and many respondents were appreciative of this. However, there are still problems with distribution both to and within schools. In some case study schools books were not made regularly available for pupil use and so their value for learning was lost. In lessons where pupils did have access to textbooks their potential to have a positive impact on learning was not fully exploited by teachers, who tended to use them in a rather limited ways, for reading out loud or for setting exercises.

A lack of **proficiency in English** (by teachers and pupils) denied many pupils access to the curriculum, contributing to teacher and pupil frustration, exam failure, pupil absenteeism and dropout. Where it was within the capability of the teacher, teaching took place through a mixture of English and Hausa. This strategy, however, meant that lesson material took longer to cover, and minority language speakers not fluent in Hausa were further disadvantaged, as were Hausa-speaking pupils taught by non-Hausa speakers.

Didactic and teacher-centred methods were universally practised. The pattern was usually teacher monologue interspersed with a mixture of choral repetition and ritualised question-and-answer routines. This often resulted in limited learning opportunities, difficulties in gauging pupil progress and unruly classes in which “teasing”, harassment and bullying went on unchecked.

Poor classroom conditions, large class sizes, wide age ranges among pupils, a lack of resources and low proficiency in English were all factors that contributed to the limited approach to teaching and learning. There was, however, limited professional support for teachers to enable them to implement the more reflective, interactive teaching methods desired by government. There was no evidence that key teaching and learning quality issues raised in this report – such as extending the time children actually spend on learning, implementing active learning, and developing systems to record pupil progress – were part of a planned CPD programme for teachers. In addition, doubts were expressed by some Board and LGEA respondents about the quality of **in-service teacher education** and **pre-service** provision, and dissatisfaction was voiced by some teachers about the lack of transparency concerning who were given opportunities to attend workshops.

The push to widen school access has resulted in many classes being comprised of pupils from a wide age range. **Overage pupils** in particular often have difficult experiences of schooling, which this research confirmed; they may achieve poor learning outcomes, are constantly at risk of dropping out and have a negative influence on the learning of others. Despite the inevitability that overage pupils are likely to be a persistent part of the primary school population, there has been little or no specific school or teacher support in strategies to deal with their learning. One case study school, however, was experimenting with separate remedial classes for older pupils although this has yet to be evaluated.

Gender stereotypes and a culture of male superiority persisted and were reinforced in school. Although gender stereotypes and expectations have detrimental influences on learning practices, there were no examples in which implicit gender discrimination was being challenged or explicitly addressed in schools. Addressing gender stereotypes and assumptions is a crucial part of any equality strategy with specific implications for pupil access, retention and outcomes.

3.7 School–community relations

The **opportunity costs** of school attendance are a key barrier to school access, especially among the poorest communities. Family obligations to pay PTA levies and make other payments, such as for writing materials and uniforms, were preventing some families from enrolling or from keeping their children in school. This was exacerbated in some schools where other unsanctioned fees were being demanded from parents.

Levels of enrolment, latecoming, absenteeism, retention, dropout and poor performance were all impacted by the need for children to contribute to their household economies. These community livelihood demands were often cyclical in nature e.g. due the planting and harvesting seasons; however, apart from reported encouragement from one LGEA, there was otherwise no evidence of **LGEA or school flexibility** to alter timetables in order to accommodate this, and thereby improve enrolment, attendance and retention in school. This lack of flexibility was also observed within Muslim communities in which the requirement to attend Islamic schools before public school led to persistent pupil latecoming. These pupils were then met by repeated punishment, with the inevitable effects on learning quality and retention.

Dropout, especially of boys, also resulted from the combination of low school quality and limited local employment opportunities. This suggests that immediate opportunities to earn money won out against the rather intangible and longer term benefits of schooling. In some schools, parents indicated that both excessive corporal punishment and teacher absenteeism had prompted them to withdraw their children from school. There was little evidence of SBMCs (or even of LGEAs or

school management) addressing the problems related to dropout or wider issues of school quality and teacher management.

Successful **community sensitisation** campaigns by LGEAs and schools especially among Muslim families have reportedly improved the enrolment of boys and girls in school. However, they appear to have had limited impact on gender-stereotyping. **Addressing gender inequalities** is central to the efforts for universal primary education (UPE) and this appears to be needed among all groups of stakeholders, including girls, who need to be supported in taking up their educational rights, achieving highly and completing school. The research evidence confirmed that pregnancy and early marriage continue to hamper educational opportunities, mainly of girls but also of boys.

Many **PTAs** had made obvious contributions to school development, especially with respect to buildings. The operation of the school–community liaison function, however, was more variable, with evidence that often the PTA committee did not consult ordinary community members widely. Therefore opportunities to collectively address enrolment, retention and quality issues were lost.

The relatively recent establishment of **SBMCs** appears to have produced some confusion about their distinction from PTAs. Their central role in school governance focuses on the SBMC as an important conduit for the community voice, a mechanism for quality improvements and part of a system of accountability. There was limited evidence of the SBMCs acting systematically in any of these functions although there was reported involvement of SBMCs in raising funds for school development and in community sensitisation. In addition, evidence from the research indicates that, like the PTA, SBMC membership is not representative of the community and only in one case study school were pupils included on the committee (albeit only on paper) in accordance with the official guidance. The exclusion of the female voice and that of ordinary community members or parents in several instances was noteworthy and implicitly discriminatory.

School–community relations were at their strongest when communities provided funds, labour or material for school infrastructural development since both school and community respondents were agreed on its importance. Beyond that, however, many respondents recognised the need for **greater engagement between schools, LGEAs and communities**. In general, though, in discussion about school–community relations it was the primacy of the school perspective that prevailed. Although there was some recognition by school and LGEA staff of the multiple difficulties some parents and community members faced with regards to schooling their children, ultimately **parents** and **community** members were often framed in negative, **deficit** terms and held to be responsible for lack of school access, retention and/or poor learning outcomes. There was rarely any acknowledgement that the poor quality of schooling or livelihood demands might be significant contributory factors to parents' unwillingness to enrol or keep their children in school. Many head teachers were ill-equipped to negotiate or consult with community members and in cases where communications had broken down, the LGEA was called on to intervene. There were evident **capacity building** needs in all the three stakeholder groups (LGEAS, schools and teachers, community) as well as within the community liaison bodies of the PTA and SBMC.

4. RECOMMENDATIONS

4.1 Introduction

The recommendations have been organised to relate to the three stakeholder groups: educational administration, schools and communities. As communications and collaboration within and between them is critical to improving pupil access to high quality education, these recommendations necessarily overlap. A more elaborated list of recommendations is provided at the end of the main report. It should also be emphasised that implementation of most of these recommendations is likely to require substantial, gender-sensitive capacity building among the three stakeholder groups, to enable them to carry out their school-related functions more effectively.

4.2 Educational governance

4.2.1 Systems development and professional practice

- The **quality of data** gathering, processing and reporting needs to be improved and utilised to inform all aspects of educational policy, equality strategies and practice. The data and statistical analysis systems should be used for annual reports, monitoring and evaluation and research of emergent issues. The capacity development needs throughout these processes are vital to the achievement of high-quality reliable data.
- The system for **appointment, promotion and deployment** of teachers and all education personnel needs to be strengthened and implemented in a transparent way. A pay and promotion structure for teachers should to be developed and include job descriptions, professional expectations, line-management and accountability structures, decision-making responsibilities and incentives (e.g. for quality improvements, school responsibilities, deployment to rural schools etc.). This needs to be accompanied by improved administration to ensure prompt and regular salary payments.
- **Continuing Professional Development** for all educational personnel needs to be planned, targeted and responsive. For LGEA officers and head teachers this should include training in M&E, supporting professional practice (including pedagogy), line and teacher management skills and community liaison. Other strategies to enhance the professionalism of teachers might include the delivery of school-based CPD to local school clusters and the specification of in-service training days.
- The quality of the school experience and outcomes would be enhanced by clear state-level guidance, support and training in the following two key areas:
 - **language use** The use of local languages and bi-/ multi- lingual approaches to teaching needs to be reconsidered and supported with appropriate textbooks. Additionally, the use of English needs to be strengthened perhaps by developing a cadre of specialist English teachers.
 - **disciplinary sanctions** that are incremental, non-violent, non-physical and non-disruptive to pupil learning need to be developed. All education personnel need to be trained in a code of practice that highlights a duty of care, and aims to eliminate gender-based violence and provide victim support.
- All aspects of educational governance and administration need to adhere to principles of **equality and inclusion**. This must be integral to policies and practices throughout the education system all of which should be subject to monitoring and evaluation. This is a wide-scale remit that includes appointments, representation, opportunities, voice and participation within and between the stakeholder groups (e.g. educational workforce, pupil populations and community involvement etc.). It includes reference to gender, poverty, religion, disability, nomadic groups and rural populations. This might entail the development of specific or flexible forms of schooling and particular kinds of educational

personnel for those children not achieving their educational rights through mainstream provision, such as is being practised in the current provision of nomadic schooling.

- Links between education and **health** service providers need to be strengthened to improve school access and the health, hygiene and welfare of pupils in schools.

4.2.2 Infrastructure and resources

- The number of **schools and classrooms** needs to be increased and the quality of many existing buildings and classrooms upgraded. They also need to be equipped with sufficient **furniture** and secure storage. The establishment of schools should include accessible **water**, well-maintained, gender-segregated **toilet** facilities and adequate shaded areas in the compound. Optimally the school should include a library, a computer lab and play resources.
- **School security** needs specific attention and should include a boundary fence and gate to enclose a safe and clean school compound. Negotiations with the community are vital as their agreement and support are essential for sustaining the safety of the school environment.
- The supply, distribution and use of **textbooks** need to be improved. They should be available to teachers and pupils and used meaningfully in the classroom. For pupils in financial hardship writing materials and exercise books should be available.

4.3 Schools, head teachers and teachers

4.3.1 Head teachers

- Sustained attention needs to be paid to the **buildings, resources, amenities and security** of the school, as well as to the safety of the pupils. The achievement and oversight of this kind of school environment will necessitate: negotiations with the community, SBMC, PTA and LGEA; the ready availability of school and learning resources; as well as vigilance about the proper use of the school, the amenities and resources.
- **Support for teachers** in achieving the highest professional standards is a central strategy for improving school quality. This might include personal support, school-based initiatives and state-level workshops. It should be accomplished with support from the SS and ES from the LGEA, through collaboration with head teachers from other local schools and discussions in regular staff meetings. Generic issues in need of focused attention include: teacher punctuality and attendance in school and in the classroom; the development and implementation of a more diverse range of approaches to teaching and to pupil discipline; the use of teaching resources; development of curriculum resource; language capacity building; and career development advice.
- A system of **pupil representation** should be integral to the school's organisation. Their ideas, energy and engagement will provide a positive influence on improved attendance and quality. It may also be used as a means to demonstrate the importance of **inclusion and equality** that should characterise every facet of the organisation and operation of the school.
- **Collaboration and communications with the community** needs to be strengthened and integrated in the management of the school and in future planning. The operation of the **SBMC and PTA** are vital to improving access, quality, school development and accountability, and their positive support in liaising between the school and community needs to be encouraged and utilised fully. Creative, reciprocal and not always financially based engagements between the school and community need to be positively encouraged and promoted.

4.3.2 Teachers

- Continual efforts to **improve teaching quality** and pupil learning are fundamental to the professional work of teachers. In the first instance this entails being in class, and engaged in teaching activities at the appointed times. In addition, this includes proactively seeking CPD opportunities, engaging with other local teacher colleagues and personal professional endeavour. The research evidence indicates that these efforts could usefully focus on: the development and implementation of schemes of work and lesson plans; increasing the time pupils spend ‘on task’ learning; providing opportunities for greater pupil participation; adopting diverse approaches to teaching, moving towards more child-centred learning; checking and recording the learning progress of each pupil; providing feedback and support for those with learning difficulties.
- The **management of pupils** is a key aspect of teachers’ duties. This should be accomplished by avoiding using gender as an organising structure and stereotyping (e.g. in cleaning duties, the appointment of prefects). There is need to develop and operate an incremental, non-violent and gender-aware system of **rewards** and **disciplinary sanctions** for pupils. These must avoid the use of pupil labour, physical harm and public humiliation. Alongside the need for pupil discipline, every teacher has a **duty of care** that requires intervention in all forms of gender-based violence, bullying or pupil conflicts, including what is often perceived as “teasing”. It also entails facilitating pupil access, for example, through personal and school-level efforts to avoid punishing pupils for their parents’ inability to pay school levies, following up those pupils who have poor attendance or punctuality records and seeking links with health services to improve pupil welfare.

4.4. Communities

- There is a sustained need to ensure that community members are aware of each **child’s rights** to education irrespective of gender, religion, ethnicity, disability or economic circumstances. School PTAs and SBMCs, in collaboration with teachers, the LGEA and other community organisations, need to continue to engage in social mobilisation. Community members need to be encouraged and to encourage all parents and guardians in their responsibilities for the education of all children in the community. The gender and equity message must be integral to social mobilisation as well as the freedom from violence used in child discipline.
- Wide and equitable **community representation** on the PTA and SBMC is vital to ensure that multiple community voices are heard and that community views are not dominated by a single interest group or the school’s perspective. Evidence from the research indicates the serious under-representation of female and poorer community members. The absence of voice might mean that simple solutions to improve school access are not attempted. For example, school access might be facilitated by slight changes to the school day in response to the livelihood demands of particular communities. These can only come to light through if the community voice is aired and engaged. This is also a crucial dimension of school **accountability**.
- The **community involvement** in the school needs to be encouraged through improved outreach, systems of communication and more open consultation with a wide range of community members. Good communications and relations will provide a better foundation for the school and facilitate greater community involvement in the school and its development. There is a need, however, to explore ways in which parents might become involved or contribute to the school in non-financial ways. The research suggests there may be reciprocal benefits to be gained from community support in ensuring school and pupil security, which in turn would preserve the school as a community resource to be used after lessons for various community activities (e.g. adult literacy classes).

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