The Working Conditions of Teachers in Low- and Middle-Income Countries

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Teachers are important

Teacher effects estimates are substantial in a range of contexts

Teacher knowledge matters

Teacher behavior matters

Even the most effective interventions not labeled as teacher interventions are often delivered via teachers

Teachers are often pointed to as the problem

- High absenteeism
- Little instructional time
- Insufficient mastery of content knowledge

As civil service employees, many teachers enjoy relatively high pay and generous benefits

Service Delivery Indicators (SDI)

Teacher salary as the single largest budget item

Bold et al. 2017
There are constant calls for increased accountability for teachers.

- Contract tenure
- Teacher accountability
- Teacher performance pay
- Increase teacher pay

Mbiti 2016; Bruns et al. 2011; de Ree et al. 2017
But why do teachers not perform?

What do teachers say?

- Low job satisfaction
- Low pay – strikes
- High attrition
- Poor living and working conditions
- Lack of professional incentives, implicit and explicit

Very little large-scale quantitative data on this topic

- TALIS for OECD countries
- SABER teachers – policy assessment

What do we know?
This paper

- Characterizes the working conditions of teachers to provide context to the failures of teacher performance
- Brings into one place evidence from a wide array of smaller scale quantitative and qualitative sources
- A starting point to fill another dimension of policy debates around teachers
This paper

The objective is not to justify poor performance on the part of teachers, but to recognize that poor performance is often the product of a system which may include poor working conditions.
Search Strategy and Method

- No SDI for teacher working conditions but a LOT of anecdotes.
- We did searches on Google, Google Scholar, major journals.

**Search Keywords:**

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“teacher motivation” + “teacher job satisfaction” + “teacher working conditions” + “teacher living conditions” + “developing countries” + “country name”
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- Books, journal articles and references from them
- Reports
- Public Expenditure Reviews (PER) and Public Expenditure Tracking Surveys (PETS)
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In the absence of systematic data, we bring a wide range of small-scale surveys and qualitative data to substantiate anecdotes rooted in reality.
What do humans need?

Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs

- Physiological needs
- Safety needs
- Belongingness and love needs
- Esteem needs
- Self-actualization needs

Maslow, 1943
What do teachers need?

Self-fulfillment needs
- Career development

Psychological needs
- Social status of teachers
- School management

Basic needs
- Work load, work environment
- Initial & continuing preparation
- Living conditions; compensation
Basic needs
Pupil to Teacher Ratio (PTR) in the years after the implementation of Free Primary Education compared to that in the last year with fees
Besides teaching, teachers often assume other activities and duties:

- Extra curricular
- Parental association
- Paperwork
- Collect census data
- Construction work

Liu and Onwuegbuzie 2012; Luschei and Chudgar 2017; Bennell and Akyeampong 2007; Vavrus and Salema 2013
Percentage of untrained teachers in primary education

UIS 2017, year 2015 or latest year available since 2011
Getting Better: Professional Development

ARE TEACHERS REQUIRED TO PARTICIPATE IN PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT?

Yes, 10 or more days, 24%
Yes, 1 to 5 days, 21%
Yes, undefined, 18%
No, 36%

Djibouti
Egypt
Guinea-Bissau
Kazakhstan
Moldova
Nigeria, Anambra
Paraguay
Tunisia

Benin
Cambodia
Cote d'Ivoire
Georgia
Lebanon
Mali
Nigeria, Bauchi
Nigeria, Ekiti
Morocco
Solomon Islands
West Bank and Gaza
Yemen

Guyana
Jordan
Mozambique
Russia
Serbia

Bulgaria
Kenya
Macedonia
Papua New Guinea
Samoa
Uganda

SABER teachers 2017
Teacher pay

Teachers' salaries as a percentage of GDP per capita, lower secondary education

OECD 2016, Pole de Dakar 2016, UNESCO 2013
Relatively high pay masks poor living conditions

- **50%** Went to work hungry
  
  Teachers in Lesotho, Zambia, and Sierra Leone

- **94%** Needed to make extra money
  
  Teachers in Ilala, Tanzania, and 31% failed to prepare their lessons

- **68%** Took other jobs
  
  Primary teachers in Cambodia; also in Uganda

- **75%** Wanted to work more
  
  Principals in Tajikistan reported that teachers wanted to increase their salary

Bennell and Akyeampong 2007; Timothy and Nkwama 2017; World Bank 2016; World Bank 2008
Delays and leaks in teacher salary payment

- **Insufficient budget**: Lao PDR - 70% delay, Chad - Arrears of 10 months, Philippines - 40-50% delay, Madagascar - Substantial delay
- **Lengthy payroll prep**: Afghanistan - 20% delay, DRC - 100% delay
- **Inefficient delivery**: Liberia - Travel costs 25-50% salary, Yemen - Never the same in two consecutive months, DRC - Less than 60% of owed
- **Salary leaks**: Zambia - Travel takes 12 days, Afghanistan - No travel budget, Mali - Delays if collectors are busy

(Manufacturer: World Bank; PERS and PETS in multiple years.)
Psychological needs
School management

Less than 20% of schools principals checked whether teachers met curricular objectives.

“Efforts of teachers are not appreciated, supported or even abused by officials”

89% of Indonesian teachers indicated that regular teacher evaluation would motivate them to perform better

Supervision and support mechanisms (for teaching) are infrequent, especially in remote schools and lack of focus

Buron and Lassibille 2016; Mozambique Education PER, 2017; Broekman 2013; Mooij 2008
Social status of teachers

Would you encourage your child to become a teacher?

- Probably/definitely encourage
- Maybe encourage
- Definitely/probably not encourage

Dolton and Marcenaro-Gutierrez 2013
73% of teachers in rural schools in Ghana did not feel that they were respected in their community.

Teachers in Tanzania concurred that they did not have the respect that educators had in the past.

In Andhra Pradesh, India, teachers agreed uniformly that there has been a considerable decline in their social status over the years.
Take-aways

• We should expect a lot from teachers (accountability) but also provide them the support and working conditions in line with those expectations.

• Understanding teachers’ needs are crucial to keep them motivated and deliver learning

• More systematic data are needed to picture the real living and working conditions of teachers in developing countries
Thank you

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