Inclusion in Teacher Policies and Practices:

Gender Equality in Teaching and Teacher Management in Cameroon

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Study context: policy framework

- Impact on education quality: gendered roles and opportunities impact teacher motivation and performance and student experiences and learning outcomes
- Cameroon's education policies aligned with MDG/EFA goals
- Focus on gender equality at the student level (access, retention), few references to gender equality in teaching and education management
The research

Research partnership

• VSO's 'Valuing Teachers' research and advocacy programme: research on gender equality in education in Cameroon and Rwanda

• partners: UK National Union of Teachers, VSO & CUSO International, International Task Force on Teachers for EFA (UNESCO)

• collaboration with the Forum for African Women Educationalists Cameroon (FAWECAM)
The purpose of the research was to...

- examine gender equality in teaching and education management in Cameroon
- document policy initiatives linked with gender equality in teaching and in education management

Qualitative research involving...

- 54 focus groups with students, teachers, and parents
- interviews with 25 regional education managers and 16 national stakeholders
- findings validated by regional and national stakeholders
Findings: primary themes

- gender parity in teaching and education management
- gendered impacts of family responsibilities on teacher experiences
- obstacles to female teachers' advancement to education management positions
- female teachers' deployment and retention in rural communities
- sexual violence in schools
- application of gender-responsive teaching approaches
Gender parity in teaching and education management

• male teachers outnumber female teachers in primary and secondary education (primary: 52.2%/47.8%, secondary: 69.2%/30.8%)
• regional disparities in female/male representation (75% male primary teachers and 90% secondary teachers in the Far North vs. 44% and 60% in the Northwest)
• more male teachers in rural zones, especially ZEPs (82% of rural primary teachers in the Far North and 62% in the East are male)
• education management dominated by men (86.4% of primary school principals and 94.3% of secondary school principals are men)
Gendered impacts of family responsibilities on teacher experiences

• impact of family responsibilities on female teachers' punctuality, performance, stability and access to incentives
• breast-feeding hours and paternity leaves not always respected, maternity leaves cause extra work for (male) teachers

Obstacles to advancement to education management positions

• female teachers face particular obstacles in accessing continuing studies (ex., family responsibilities)
• barriers to women's appointment to positions of responsibility: domestic responsibilities, personal choice, insufficient professional criteria
Female teachers' deployment and retention in rural zones

- Female teachers are particularly vulnerable to challenges in rural communities, including isolation, transportation/access difficulties, sexual harassment.
- Female teachers make significant efforts to be transferred from rural zones, more female teachers in urban zones than rural zones.

Sexual violence in schools

- Female teachers' experiences of sexual violence by colleagues, managers, male students.
- Lack of concrete (and enforced) reporting and discipline procedures, no specific measures to address violence between teachers.
Application of gender-responsive teaching approaches

- lack of awareness/understanding of specific pedagogic approaches: gender not specifically integrated in teacher training, barriers to gender-responsive pedagogic supervision and support
- gendered interactions between female and male teachers and students influence teaching and learning
Challenges in gender-responsive policy development, implementation, and monitoring

- inconsistent understanding of *gender, gender inequity,* and *gender equality* amongst teachers and education managers, no clear definition at the policy level
- obstacles to effective decentralisation limit responses to regional disparities/challenges
- no systematic policy communication from national ministries to the ground (lack of awareness among teachers, school managers)
- lack of clear, measurable (and gender-responsive) objectives and indicators
Gender in policy strategies

Only a small number of policies specifically address gender in teaching and teacher management:

- deployment of local female teachers to 'priority' rural zones (ZEPs)
- references to women as beneficiaries of teacher housing and gender mainstreaming in benefits instruments
- consideration of a gender approach in teacher pedagogic training and supervision

No specific policy objectives or strategies to encourage/facilitate women's recruitment, retention, and advancement in teaching and education management
Recommendations for gender-responsive policy development

• specific gender components in teacher training and pedagogic supervision

• clear, measurable targets and indicators for gender equality in teaching and management (ex., policies to increase female teachers in secondary education)

• strategies to address impacts of family responsibilities (ex., arrange work hours to accommodate family responsibilities, ensure access to full paternity leave)

• enhanced supports for (female) teachers deployed to rural zones
• gender training for education managers
• access to continuing professional development for (female) teachers
• clear procedures for communication of policy information to the regional and school level
• national regulations and procedures addressing sexual violence in schools
• consideration of regional realities in policy development (targets, strategies, indicators)
The research report will be available on the VSO website:
www.vsointernational.org/valuingteachers

“We have met many groups... groups of teachers, of female managers, of students from the lycée, from primary... After a brief definition of the gender concept, these women realised that they do gender activities, they are sensitive to certain behaviours of men with respect to girls/women, without realising that it's gender” (PTA board member)