Actions and interactions:

Gender equality in teaching and education management in Cameroon

Summary report

Introduction

Research context and objectives

Gender equality at the student level is linked with gender equality in education structure, teaching and management personnel, and pedagogic approaches and content. It is also linked with the ways in which socially constructed female and male roles, responsibilities and opportunities are reflected in educational environments (Global Campaign for Education, 2011; UNESCO, 2005, 2012). Gender (in)equality in education structure, content, interactions and opportunities influences teacher motivation and performance and, in turn, the experiences and outcomes of female and male students.

A number of international frameworks identify gender equality throughout the educational system as a primary objective. They include the Millennium Development Goals, the Education for All (EFA) goals, the Dakar Framework for Action on EFA, the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), and the African Union's Second Decade of Education for Africa. Cameroon's most recent education policy documents – the National Action Plan for EFA (*Plan d'Action National de l'Education Pour Tous*, PAN-EPT), the Sector Wide Approach to Education (*Stratégie Sectorielle de l'Education*, SSE) for 2006–15, and the Growth and Employment Strategy Paper (GESP) for 2010–20 – are guided by some of these international frameworks, and include references to gender equality and the reduction of gender disparities.

This research examines gender equality in teaching and education management in primary and secondary education in Cameroon, with a focus on policy efforts and challenges which have contributed to the goal of gender equality.

This research was commissioned and funded by the International Task Force on Teachers for Education for All, the United Kingdom's National Union of Teachers (NUT), VSO International and Cuso International. The study is part of VSO International's Valuing Teachers research and advocacy programme. The research was jointly realised by VSO Cameroon and the Forum for African Women Educationalists Cameroon (FAWECAM).

Methodology

This qualitative study was carried out in four regions in Cameroon: the Northwest, Centre, East and Far North. Data collection was carried out between April and September 2012. Focus group discussions were held with 313 female and male students, teachers and parents from four primary schools and six secondary schools. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with 25 regional education managers, including regional and divisional MINEDUB (*Ministère de l'Education de Base*/Ministry of Basic Education) and MINESEC (*Ministère des Enseignements Secondaires*/Ministry of Secondary Education) delegates, sub-divisional inspectors, school principals and head teachers, as well as 16 national-level stakeholders, including MINEDUB, MINESEC and MINPROFF (*Ministère de Promotion de la Femme et de la Famille*/Ministry of Women's Empowerment and the Family) officials and representatives of national and international organisations. Findings and recommendations were reviewed and refined during regional and national validation workshops.

Key findings

Gender parity in teaching and education management

In Cameroon, **men outnumber women in primary and secondary teaching posts as well as in education management at the school and ministry level** (see Table 1). The proportion of female teachers is particularly low in priority education zones, despite government efforts to deploy local female teachers to these zones (only one policy text, the SSE, recognises their significance as role models for students and communities). National statistics mask regional disparities (see Table 5), which can limit responses to regional needs and perhaps feed beliefs that gender equality is not a concern.

Teacher recruitment has been identified as a strategy to improve education quality in the PAN-EPT, the SSE and the GESP. However, **no specific strategies or targets have been identified to train, recruit and retain qualified female teachers**. This is true in both primary and secondary teaching in general and for fields traditionally dominated by men, such as scientific and technical education. Traditionally "feminine" and "masculine" roles appear to persist in primary and secondary teaching, in terms of the distribution of teaching responsibilities (class levels and subjects).

Women are significantly outnumbered by men among primary and secondary school principals and at the ministry level (see Tables 2 and 3). **No education policy texts refer specifically to the recruitment of female managers.**

Table 1: Primary and secondary teachers in 2010/11

Primary teachers*			Secondary teachers**			
Total	**%F**	**%M**		**Total**	**%F**	**%M**
53,452	**47.8**	**52.2**	Total	**37,414**	**30.8**	**69.2**
			General	**26,736**	29.1	70.9
			Technical	**10,678**	35	65

Sources: MINEDUB, 2011; MINESEC, 2011
* Public primary teachers
** All secondary teachers

Table 2: Primary and secondary school principals

Primary schools (public)*			Secondary schools (general & technical)**		
Total	**F**	**M**	**Total**	**F**	**M**
9,695	**1,320**	**8,375**	**1,927**	**110**	**1,817**
	13.6%	86.4%		5.7%	94.3%

* MINEDUB statistics for 2009/10
** MINESEC statistics for 2010/11

Table 3: Women in education ministries

	MINEDUB* (Basic education)			MINESEC** (Secondary education)	
	Regional delegates	**Divisional delegates**	**Sub-divisional inspectors**	**Regional delegates**	**Divisional delegates**
Total	**10**	**58**	**360**	**10**	**58**
Female	1 (10%) (2011/12: 30%)	7 (12.1%)	33 (9.2%)	0	3 (5.2%)

* MINEDUB statistics for 2009/10
** MINESEC statistics for 2010/11 (obtained from MINESEC

Gendered experiences of teachers

Participants described challenges facing both female and male teachers. These are often linked to socio-cultural beliefs, attitudes and expectations influencing women's and men's roles, responsibilities and experiences in the home, school and community.

Female teachers face particular challenges in balancing domestic and professional roles. Household work impacts punctuality and performance, and working away from their husband or family presents a challenge for female teachers, who often request transfers on the basis of *regroupement familial* or "family regroupment". This was perceived as a significant challenge by education managers and shapes views regarding recruitment and management of female teachers.

Both female and male teachers are affected by parenthood (maternity and paternity). Female teachers' breast-feeding hours are not always respected, male teachers are not always aware of, encouraged or allowed to take paternity leave, and maternity leaves can cause extra work for other male (and female) teachers.

Teachers in rural zones, particularly female teachers, face significant challenges. These include a lack of housing and services, transportation and communication difficulties, isolation, and sexual harassment. Female teachers often go to great lengths not to work in remote rural communities.

Male teachers significantly outnumber female teachers in rural zones in all regions (see Table 4), and inequality

can exist when male teachers have a greater chance of being deployed to rural zones.

Regional education managers and national officials described efforts to respond to teacher challenges. These include government strategies to improve living and working conditions (eg housing, access to benefits or incentives), simplified transfer procedures, and sensitisation programmes to promote teacher integration and reduce teacher harassment in rural zones. These initiatives were described almost exclusively by regional and national education managers; aside from a few mentions of housing initiatives, they were not described by teachers themselves. Non-state-supported contract and temporary or PTA-hired teachers, of whom male teachers represent a higher proportion, face additional difficulties and cannot access state supports.

Gender-based violence, particularly sexual harassment, was identified as one of the most serious problems in schools, perpetrated primarily against female students (by male teachers) and female teachers (by male managers and teachers and older male students). The SSE and GESP make no specific mention of gender-based violence, and although government circulars have responded to violence in schools, these were not mentioned by teachers or managers. In responding to gender-based violence involving teachers and/or managers, concrete actions or sanctions are rarely specified in school regulations and disciplinary procedures, and existing measures are rarely enforced. The most common response appears to be teacher transfer or sensitisation; the absence of more serious sanctions can minimise the severity of the violence. Barriers to addressing violence include

Table 4: Public primary teacher location by region, zone and sex in 2010/11*

Teacher location	Cameroon			Northwest			Centre			East			Far North		
	%F	%M	Total	%F	%M	Total	%F	%M	Total	%F	%M	Total	%F	%M	Total
Total	53,452			5,061			8,141			3,115			8,927		
Urban zones	63.9	36.1	**16,396**	71.9	28.1	**652**	73.8	26.2	**3,136**	70.8	29.2	**1,109**	50.5	49.5	**2,036**
Rural zones	40.7	59.3	**37,056**	53.7	46.3	**4,409**	44.3	55.7	**5.005**	38.4	61.6	**2,006**	18	82	**6,891**

Source: MINEDUB, 2011
* Data for secondary teachers was not available

a systematic lack of reporting and teacher and manager attitudes minimising or justifying sexual violence.

Although certain GESP policy strategies (the English version only) contain some references to gender (eg references to women as housing beneficiaries and gender mainstreaming in benefits instruments), **gender considerations do not appear to be put into practice in addressing teacher challenges.** The general education policy context doesn't fully respond to gendered challenges faced by teachers, particularly the professional impacts of family responsibilities and gender-based violence.

Gender equality in education management

Although government texts outline teacher advancement procedures and promotion (nomination) criteria for school management positions, they are not perceived as being consistently applied, and procedures and decisions related to promotion are not consistently understood by teachers and school managers. **Women face particular barriers to advancement or nomination/promotion to education management**. Participants reported that women are perceived as unavailable or unreliable due to family responsibilities, that they do not seek out such positions or are unwilling to accept positions in rural areas, or that they lack confidence and self-esteem, initiative or ambition. Challenges faced by women (particularly family responsibilities) in accessing continuing training opportunities also prevent them from acquiring necessary qualifications or experience. Teachers in rural communities also face difficulties with respect to career development, such as access to information or study opportunities, with male teachers more highly represented in rural areas.

Many female and male teachers reported that managers' ability depends on individual character or merit and not their sex, with no real difference between female and male managers. However, **socio-cultural roles and expectations regarding gender roles are reflected in perceptions of managers' impacts and interactions.** Female managers are often perceived as maternal figures, ensuring more responsive and efficient personnel (and school) management, although they were also described as particularly severe towards female teachers.

Managers described some efforts to promote gender equality in education management, including gender-related training activities for divisional, regional and national educational managers, and efforts by regional managers to promote women's representation in management. However, these do not necessarily reflect systematic or widespread approaches. Participants did not describe local or national strategies to address specific barriers to women's career development, and the impacts of family responsibilities on women's professional advancement appear to be generally perceived as "natural". Gender-responsive personnel management practices may be limited by a lack of gender considerations in policies and career development texts and a lack of clear policy objectives and indicators f or gender in human resource management in education. National ministry officials reported that **sex or gender are not considered in personnel management procedures,** and that no positive discrimination approaches are applied – opportunities are the same for women and men, with no specific strategies to encourage women's appointment.

Regional education managers, school principals or *chefs d'établissement* and school management committees (school councils and PTAs) are responsible, to varying degrees, for teacher recruitment and management, school financing/budgeting and other aspects of education management. Managers' ability to examine and respond to gender inequalities, among teachers and within schools, is limited by multiple responsibilities, a lack of comprehensive management and gender training, and inconsistent or incomplete understandings of gender and gender equality.

Gender-responsive approaches to teaching

Participants described the gendered influence of teachers' approaches, in teaching as well as in responding to student psycho-social challenges, which significantly influence student school experiences and achievement. Although education policy strategies reference gender with respect to teaching approaches, **many teachers reported that they were not familiar with gender-sensitive pedagogic techniques**. Most teachers defined a gender-responsive classroom as one in which female and male students are treated in the same manner (eg mixed seating, equal distribution of classroom tasks), without consideration of gender.

Male and female primary and secondary students face challenges including household and farming chores, schooling costs and lack of school materials, experiences of violence, and physical and sexual development. Teachers expressed an awareness of the gendered impacts of these challenges on girls' school performance, particularly household responsibilities and sexual development (eg menstruation or pregnancy), and some described responses to these challenges.

Participants' perceptions of female and male teachers and their interactions with students often reflected traditional gender roles. Female teachers were described as maternal, affectionate, and more sensitive to student challenges, and male teachers as stronger authority and discipline figures. Female teachers, however, were also perceived as less available (due to household responsibilities) than male teachers by some participants. A number of participants described conflict or tension between female teachers and female students, and between male teachers and male students.

Teachers and school managers described individual pedagogic and student support efforts, rather than efforts integrated into school or education policies. However, high student:teacher ratios and limitations in initial and continuing training impede teachers' ability to respond effectively to students' gender-specific learning needs and psycho-social challenges.

Although most references to gender in education policy texts refer to pedagogical training and supervision for teachers, **gender-specific content does not appear to be fully integrated into primary and secondary teachers' initial training, continuing professional development and pedagogic supervision.** Current teacher training does not necessarily provide teachers with the practical knowledge and skills needed to respond to girls' and boys' specific learning (academic) and psycho-social needs and challenges.

Changes and challenges in gender equality in teaching and education management

Research participants identified many positive school-and ministry-level efforts to integrate gender considerations in teaching and education management, as well as remaining practice and policy challenges. Many different understandings of gender equality emerged during the research; it was described by teachers and regional and national managers in terms of equal numbers of men and women, gender neutrality/blindness, or referring only to women. **The lack of a clear and consistent definition of gender/gender equality amongst teachers and managers** can hamper analyses of and responses to gender and inequality, which require an examination of women's and men's roles, responsibilities, experiences and opportunities, as well as the gender dynamics shaping their interactions.

Gender-responsive policy development and monitoring is limited by the **lack of a clear definition of gender or gender equality in education policy documents** and by challenges to the effective implementation of MINPROFF's efforts to promote a gender approach at the ministry level (these efforts include gender focal points in national ministries and the development of a national gender policy).

National, regional and divisional education officials referred to **cultural traditions as a significant influence or barrier with respect to gender equality**. These influence professional opportunities, interactions (between students, teachers and managers), and the persistence of inequalities within the home. Factors influencing gender equality, including cultural and traditional factors as well as women's representation in teaching and education management (see Table 5), vary widely across Cameroon's 10 regions. Although many stakeholders emphasised the importance of considering regional differences in policy development, implementation and evaluation, **regional disparities are not explicitly or consistently acknowledged or addressed in most education policies.**

Policy information does not appear to be systematically and consistently communicated between national ministries and regional-level managers, school managers and teachers. **Policy communication and other implementation challenges limit the impact of existing policies on the ground.** Policy implementation and monitoring is impeded by a lack of clear, measurable gender-responsive targets and indicators, and by budget constraints and obstacles to effective decentralisation.

Table 5: Variations in education indicators across the research regions

		Basic education (public)				Secondary education (general & technical)			
		NW	Centre	East	FN	NW	Centre	East	FN
Student: teacher ratio		51:1	46:1	56:1	72:1	Data not available			
Total teachers	Female (%)	56	55.7	49.9	25.4	30.8	39.5	38.7	12.2
	Male (%)	44	44.3	50.1	74.6	69.2	60.5	61.3	87.8
Contract/temporary (C/T) teachers*	% total teachers	82.3	70.1	84.2	92.1	40.7	53.7	49.6	29.1
	Female C/T (%)	58.3	56.3	51.8	27.1	35.6	34.1	15.8	9.1
	Male C/T (%)	41.7	43.7	48.2	64.9	64.4	65.9	84.2	90.9
Qualified civil servant (CS) teachers	% total teachers	17.7	29.8	15.8	7.9	59.3	46.3	50.4	70.9
	Female CS (%)	45.3	54.1	40	5.8	41.9	25.1	42.6	20.4
	Male CS (%)	54.7	45.8	60	94.2	58.1	74.9	57.4	79.6
Rural teachers	Female (%)	53.7	44.3	38.4	18	Data not available			
	Male (%)	46.3	55.7	61.6	82				
School principals	Female (%)	20.9	20.2	12.7	3.4	5.8	9.2	3.8	3.4
	Male (%)	79.8	79.8	87.3	96.6	94.2	90.8	96.2	96.6

Sources: MINEDUB, 2010, 2011; MINESEC, 2010, 2011
*All non-civil servant teachers (including contract, temporary & PTA teachers)

Reflection on the research findings

These findings reflect the reality that **"gender" and "gender equality" refer to both women and men.** Although most gender-related inequalities have a particularly significant impact on female teachers' and managers' experiences and opportunities, gendered challenges facing male teachers emerged during this research. Findings concerning conflict between female managers and teachers and between female teachers and students also reflect the complexity of gendered interactions.

Although some of Cameroon's teaching and education management policies make reference to gender, they do not appear to be widely or consistently implemented on the ground, probably due to the **lack of clear policy targets, comprehensive strategies to attain targets, and specific indicators to monitor progress.** The integration of gender language ("gender approach/mainstreaming/equality") in policy documents must be linked with concrete actions and measurable indicators. Effective policies promoting gender equality amongst teachers and managers can ensure the **presence of positive female and male role models for both students and teachers, female and male.** The presence of role models who challenge gendered stereotypes and model equality in roles, responsibilities, opportunities and interactions is as important as parity in numbers.

Participants described significant school concerns, including high student:teacher ratios, teacher shortages, and insufficient school infrastructure, textbooks and materials. Gender equality may often be perceived as a secondary priority, outweighed by more immediate needs. However, **basic educational needs and gender are not mutually exclusive concerns:** gender considerations ought to be integrated into policy and budget strategies, not considered as a separate priority.

Recommendations

The recommendations emerging from this research are intended to inform gender-responsive policy development and practice in primary and secondary education. Their implementation depends on attention to regional diversity and disparities, effective decentralisation, and communication and collaboration between government ministries and central and regional structures and between government bodies and NGOs/CSOs or donors.

Gender parity in teaching and education management

Recommendations for education ministries
- Develop specific, measurable targets and strategies to train, recruit and retain qualified female secondary teachers
- Develop specific, measurable targets and strategies to train, recruit and retain qualified male primary teachers
- Set a clear vision with measurable objectives and indicators for women's representation in education management positions
- Develop strategies to encourage and enable women to take on education management positions

Gendered experiences of teachers

Recommendations for education ministries and regional managers
- Enhance and implement supports for teachers in rural zones, particularly women
- Arrange female teachers' work hours to accommodate childcare and family responsibilities
- Ensure that male teachers are aware of their right to paternity leave, and enable access to full paternity leave
- Facilitate active involvement of local authorities in teacher support and education management

Gender equality in education management

Recommendations for education ministries
- Develop and implement gender-responsive management training for education managers and school management committees
- Facilitate opportunities for continuing professional development for female and male teachers
- Develop, disseminate and implement national policies addressing gender-based violence in education

Recommendations for regional managers
- Ensure that severe sanctions for teachers and managers responsible for gender-based violence are applied
- Encourage women's representation in leadership positions in school management committees

Recommendations for NGOs and CSOs
- Capacity-building for school managers and school management committees

Gender-responsive approaches to teaching

Recommendations for education ministries
- Integrate specific training on gender and gender equality into teacher training curricula
- Reinforce continuing teacher training and professional development programmes by integrating themes on gender and gender equality
- Clearly define how pedagogical supervisors and inspectors will integrate gender considerations into teacher support and evaluation
- Integrate themes on gender and gender equality into primary and secondary school curricula
- Integrate clear and comprehensive student support measures into school policies and regulations

Recommendations for teachers
- Actively seek out continuing professional development and self-development opportunities

Recommendations for NGOs and CSOs
- Capacity-building for teachers, focusing on practical pedagogical strategies and materials for gender-responsive pedagogy and responses to student challenges
- Implement school-based capacity-building activities enabling students and teachers, particularly girls and women, to resolve social/academic challenges

Understanding gender and gender equality

Recommendations for ministries
- Develop clear, consistent and practical definitions of gender/gender equality in education policy documents
- Enhance knowledge- and capacity-building on gender and gender equality for education personnel at the ministry and school level
- Recommendations for NGOs and CSOs
- Sensitise students, parents, teachers, education managers, school management committees and community leaders about gender equality in education

Policy development and implementation

Recommendations for ministries and regional managers
- Develop clear and specific gender-responsive targets and indicators in education policies
- Ensure consistent communication of policies and procedures to teachers and managers
- Ensure regular, comprehensive monitoring and evaluation of national education policy implementation
- Consider regional realities and challenges in the development of policy strategies and indicators
- Continue collecting reliable, detailed sex-disaggregated teaching and education management data

Recommendations for teachers and managers
- Actively seek out information on education policies and procedures
- Recommendations for development agencies and donors
- Require that gender considerations be integrated into national policy and development programmes
- Support the implementation of government and NGO/CSO initiatives to promote gender equality in teaching and education management
- Support research into specific gender issues in teaching and education management, to guide comprehensive policy development

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VSO is an active member of the Global Campaign for Education, an international coalition of charities, civil society organisations and education unions that mobilises public pressure on governments to provide the free education for all children they promised to deliver in 2000. **www.campaignforeducation.org**

Since 2009, VSO has also been a member of the Steering Committee of the UNESCO-hosted International Task Force on Teachers for Education for All. **www.teachersforefa.unesco.org**

Since 2000, VSO's Valuing Teachers research has been conducted in 14 countries. Following the research, advocacy strategies are created, which include the development of volunteer placements in civil society education coalitions, teachers' unions and education ministries. For more information please contact: advocacy@vso.org.uk

If you would like to volunteer with VSO please visit: **www.vsointernational.org/volunteer**

In addition to this publication, the following research may also be of interest, available from the VSO International website: **www.vsointernational.org/valuingteachers**

- Gender Equality and Education (2011)
- How Much is a Good Teacher Worth? A report on the motivation and morale of teachers in Ethiopia (2009)
- Leading Learning: A report on effective school leadership and quality education in Zanzibar (2011)
- Learning From Listening: A policy report on Maldivian teachers' attitudes to their own profession (2005)
- Lessons from the Classroom: Teachers' motivation and perceptions in Nepal (2005) Listening to Teachers: The motivation and morale of education workers in Mozambique (2008)
- Making Teachers Count: A policy research report on Guyanese teachers' attitudes to their own profession (2004)
- Managing Teachers: The centrality of teacher management to quality education. Lessons from developing countries (2008)
- Qualifying for Quality: Unqualified teachers and qualified teacher shortages in The Gambia (2011)
- Seen But Not Heard: Teachers' voice in Rwanda (2004)
- Teachers for All: What governments and donors should do (2006)
- Teachers Speak Out: A policy research report on teachers' motivation in The Gambia (2007)
- Teachers Talking: Primary teachers' contributions to the quality of education in Mozambique (2011)
- Teachers' Voice: A policy research report on teachers' motivation and perceptions of their profession in Nigeria (2007)
- Teaching Matters: A policy report on the motivation and morale of teachers in Cambodia (2008)
- Valuing School Leaders: An investigation into the constraints facing school leaders in The Maldives (2009)

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