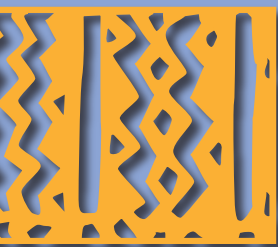


African Experiences
Country Case Studies

6



Education in Africa

Investigating Quality Factors in Private Schools in the Gambia



**Association
for the Development
of Education in Africa**

L'Harmattan

Investigating Quality Factors in Private Schools in the Gambia

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Country Case Studies

**Investigating Quality Factors
in Private Schools in the Gambia**

Research coordinated by
Republic of the Gambia
Department of State for Education

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Association for the Development of Education in Africa (ADEA)

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Foreword

The achievement of quality basic education for all by 2015 is a challenging task faced by all developing countries. This challenge is exacerbated by the issue of access, relevance, performance and retention.

This study, *Investigating Quality factors in private schools in the Gambia* looks closely at teaching and learning in private schools in the Gambia in a bid to investigate why students in private schools perform better than students in both mission and public schools as established by the Monitoring of Learning Achievement (MLA) study (2000).

In a bid to address the problem of achieving quality basic education, it is important for education systems to obtain information on what their students have learnt as a result of their educational experiences. Thus this study is geared towards that direction and aim to provide information on the factors that influence the learning outcomes of education systems.

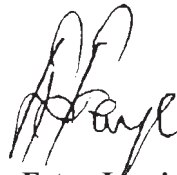
The study provides a number of approaches to assessing learning outcomes. It looks closely at the school and home factors that could lead to good student performance. It further reveals the effects of the availability of adequate teaching and learning resources, teacher preparation and involvement, good management styles and teacher incentives on children's performance.

Information obtained in measuring students' learning achievement could serve as an objective measure for the state of quality and performance in a system. Therefore the findings of the study can be used for a variety of purposes: informing policy, maintaining standards, introducing realistic targets, directing teacher efforts, raising standards of achievement, increasing parental involvement and informing political debate.

Findings of the study have been used in the Gambia to inform major policy decisions in improving quality education at the basic level and a lot of lessons have been learnt. It is my hope that other developing countries would be able to draw useful lessons from this report in the drive to provide quality basic education for all by 2015.

The Gambia will continue to collaborate with its development partners to map out strategies to enhance the improvement of quality basic education for all.

Finally, I would take this opportunity to thank the Association for the Development of Education in Africa (ADEA) for sponsoring this study.



Fatou Lamin Faye
Honorable Minister of Education
November 2005

Acronyms and abbreviations

ADEA	Association for the Development of Education in Africa
CA	Continuous Assessment
CCM	Coordinating Committee Meeting
DOSE	Department of State for Education
EFA	Education For All
ERNWACA	Educational Research Network for West and Central Africa
GABECE	Gambia Basic Education Certificate Examination
GCE	General Certificate of Education
GER	Gross Enrolment Ratio
HTC	Higher Teachers Certificate
MLA	Monitoring of Learning Achievement
NAT	National Assessment Test
PER	Public Expenditure Review
PSLCE	Primary School Leaving Certificate Examination
PTA	Parent-Teacher Association
PTC	Primary Teachers Certificate
SQAD	Standards and Quality Assurance Directorate
SSSCE	Senior Secondary School Certificate Examination
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
WAEC	West African Examination Council
WASSCE	West African Senior Secondary Certificate Examination

Executive summary

Introduction

As part of the Education For All (EFA) 2000 assessment, the Gambia conducted a Monitoring of Learning Achievement (MLA) study to assess children's learning achievement and the conditions that may influence learning. It focused on investigating learning achievements in the core subjects of Grade 4 pupils in Gambian lower basic schools, with the aim of establishing pupils' mastery levels based on benchmarks designed from the curriculum.

The methodology included stratified and random sampling procedures that used a sample of 2394 pupils from 64 schools (of which two were private) 86 Grade 4 teachers (of which two were from private schools) and 2401 parents. Learning achievement targets for Grade 4 in the core subject areas were designed and the same test instrument administered to all schools. Questionnaires were administered to all head teachers, teachers, and parents of pupils in the survey, and to the pupils themselves, with the aim of determining the factors that may influence pupils' learning achievement. The school locations were stratified according to rural, rural-urban and urban, and the school type by private, mission and government.

The findings of the MLA study were alarming. The overwhelming majority of pupils did not achieve mastery level of 70% of the curriculum. Private schools performed better than the mission and government schools. The mean scores were 84% for private, 46% for mission and 36% for government. Urban pupils outperformed the rural pupils on all tests. Boys outperformed girls on most tests.

Considering the gains made by the sector in increasing access to basic education over the past five years, the need to focus on quality cannot be over-emphasized. Furthermore, because of the data limitation in the MLA 2000 study with regard to private schools, this study includes additional students and teachers from the private schools.

It further investigates the conditions of teaching and learning at both school and classroom levels as well as home factors of students in the private schools. The aim is to determine those conditions and processes that may contribute to the poor performance in government and mission schools and the high performance in the private schools. The methodology used includes quantitative reanalysis of the MLA data by school type, and a qualitative study of the private schools.

In conducting the study, the literature reviewed focused essentially on research on school effectiveness factors, and school improvement factors. It also touched on the advantages of blending the qualitative and quantitative approaches.

Findings

The fundamental question this study seeks to answer is why private schools performed better than government and mission schools during the MLA survey and similar national assessments. The findings suggest the following explanations of the disparity in performance:

- School management style;
- Availability of basic teaching and learning resources;
- Quality of monitoring and supervision;
- Professional support provided for teachers.

The following provides a synopsis of the main findings of the study.

▪ Availability of teaching and learning materials

- From the MLA study, it could be observed that 34% of schools do not have adequate chalk supply. All such schools are either government or mission schools. Private schools do not have problems with chalk supply. However, the situation with regard to blackboards is much better in that only about 6% of government schools and 11% of mission schools do not have adequate blackboards.
- The MLA study also revealed that the government schools are the least endowed with teaching syllabi, pupils' books, teachers'

guides and dictionaries. Whereas 89% of private schools have adequate syllabi, only 32% of government and 13% of mission schools have adequate syllabi. A similar trend can be observed with pupils' textbooks: 67% of private schools have adequate textbooks, while 56% of mission and only 40% of government schools have adequate textbooks.

- In the private schools, the availability of learning materials was evident. In the classes observed the pupils were in possession of additional materials apart from the basic textbooks and notebooks. The school recommended the course books and supplementary readers. There were also resources provided by their parents, such as rulers, mathematical set boxes, vocabulary books and a book exclusively for homework or for extra tuition.
- **Quality of teaching and learning**
- Of the 71% of parents with children in private schools who are provided two hours or more of extra teaching or coaching, 58% employed a special teacher or the services of the class teacher after school. However, 59% and 51% of parents with children in government or mission schools respectively provided two or more hours of coaching, though only 26% and 36% of them utilized the services of class teachers after school or a special teacher.
- The teachers in the private schools prepared their teaching records and schemes. They taught with enthusiasm and confidence. The teachers within the same grade level prepared their lessons and schemes together, collaborating on ideas, resources and methodology.
- The lessons observed were all linked to the previous ones, which indicated continuity and progression in the teaching and learning process. The teachers made sure that the pupils, for most of the time, took care of their own learning and were fully engaged. The quiet ones among them were eventually drawn into the lesson.
- In 90% of the classes visited, the methods employed by the teachers suited the ability and age range of the pupils. They worked in peer groups and engaged in writing, drawing, measuring and

other forms of practical work. This flexibility is a process factor that determines the effectiveness of any lesson.

- Apart from the practice done by the pupils towards the end of the lessons, periodic tests were given to them and these were seen in their notebooks. The assessment records in all the classes visited indicated that teachers frequently assessed pupils and gave feedback. The pupils in all the classes were encouraged to correct their work and were interested in their achievements.

▪ **School management**

- The MLA study showed that, in government schools, less than half (43%) of the teachers' work is checked two to three times weekly, whereas in both mission and private schools, the teachers' work is checked regularly 66% of the time.
- The same study also revealed that there are more teachers in government schools (23%) pursuing training than those in mission schools (10%) and private schools (18%). The same trend can be observed with teachers pursuing further qualification in education.
- The level of head teachers' assistance in the form of school-based workshops is encouraging (government, 84%; mission, 67%; and private, 89%). However, the high frequency of school-based workshops in government schools has not produced the expected result in student performance.

▪ **Head teachers' views**

Head teachers from private schools were interviewed to assess their management styles, with a view to finding out what factors in the private schools affect school and learner performance. Qualifications and experience, the quality of teaching and learning, monitoring, supervision and assessment, parental and community participation and support, and school choice were looked at. The following came out:

- With regard to resources and incentives, head teacher salaries in private schools are a little better than those in government or mission schools, even though the difference is not significant. However, such incentives as interest-free loan schemes do make a difference.

- Private schools have more resources than both government and mission schools, as parents are willing to purchase books from the school.
 - Teachers choose to work in private schools because they gain more satisfaction in teaching. There are fewer managerial problems in terms of resources, teachers and pupils in general.
 - Lesson preparation is given prominent attention in private schools.
 - Regarding time on task, school hours are the same in private schools as in government schools.
 - In the private schools, pupils are given individual attention, and the progress of the bright ones is not delayed.
 - In terms of school supervision and management, there is constant monitoring in the private schools. Head teachers are vigilant, and teachers do not take any chances that could compromise quality.
 - In government and mission schools the majority of head teachers have secondary fourth (50%) and General Certificate of Education (GCE) 'O' level (47%) as the highest academic qualification; those in the private schools have GCE 'O' levels, and not a single head in this category has secondary four as the highest qualification.
- **Teachers' views**
- Senior teachers observed lessons and gave support, encouragement and suggestions on teaching methodologies and technique.
 - To the teachers, teaching and learning are the most important activities in the school. To maximize actual time on task, time was not wasted. Thus, both teachers and pupils arrive at school on time.
 - The administrative staff monitored compliance and did not tolerate lateness. Teachers who arrived at school late had a red line drawn beside their names, and teachers must seek permission before leaving the school premises during work hours.

▪ **Pupils' views**

- The majority of pupils in the private schools stated that they like their school because both teachers and pupils are hard-working; their teachers teach them well, and the pupils perform well in selective examinations; they work on their own, have lessons with “floating” teachers or are supervised by a neighboring class teacher.
- Pupils expressed satisfaction at the resources provided by the school and their parents.
- All the pupils indicated the absence of a library and expressed their wish to have one in their school.

▪ **Parents' views**

- The study reveals that parents' choice of a private school is influenced by a host of factors such as:
 - Good passes in national exam results;
 - Proximity to home;
 - Lack of a double-shift system;
 - Teacher status, experience and commitment;
 - Positive teacher attitude toward teaching and learning;
 - School concern for appropriate pupil behavior.
- About 50% of the parents interviewed believe that there are better teachers in private schools and, as a result, children perform better in private schools than in public schools. About 68% of parents' choice is influenced by the absence of double-shifting and no overloading of teachers.

Recommendations

- The Department of State for Education (DOSE) should ensure that the school effectiveness factors identified in private schools are adopted by all schools.
- Since the head teacher's managerial skills make a difference in the performance of a school, it is recommended that head teachers be trained on management before assuming duties. Those in managerial positions without any training should receive in-service leadership and professional management training.

- Government schools should be provided with enough teaching and learning materials, especially textbooks and supplementary books. The DOSE should ensure this by increasing the budgetary allocation for public schools.
- Teachers in government schools should sign a working contract with the head teacher, and the head teacher should be given the power to recommend the dismissal of any teacher not performing as required. This will make teachers in government schools more committed to their work.
- The issue of monitoring and supervision should be taken seriously in government schools. Internal and external monitoring should be strengthened and made more consistent. It may be better to focus on establishing internal efficiency and monitoring and supervisory measures within schools than to impose them from afar.
- The issue of school–parent links should be adequately addressed. Sensitization programs should be embarked on to bridge the existing gap. Communities and parents need to be brought closer to the schools to provide support, supplement school efforts and help to hold teachers accountable.
- Teachers constitute a significant variable in the learning process and in effectiveness of schools. Quality teaching therefore depends on the quality of teachers in terms of training, commitment, attitude, sincerity, and academic standing. The recruitment process, teacher education, promotion and professional development should not be taken for granted in public schools but addressed by policy-makers through specific measures.
- Inputs for external monitoring and supervision may not be as effective as internal efficiency and quality assurance measures instituted within each school. Incentives, job satisfaction and improved working conditions can increase teacher motivation and correspondingly increase output and improve performance.
- School policies should be made flexible to allow head teachers to experiment and implement their educational beliefs and ideas. School leaders must be educators by orientation. Head teachers must provide guidance and strong leadership, and maintain a

clear sense of direction and unity of purpose for all staff.

- Basic requirements that make schools safe, attractive, functional and fascinating should be provided and pupils encouraged to learn with or without teacher support.
- School heads should be assisted to identify the factors and characteristics associated with effective schools and to ultimately assess themselves systemically over time for improvement purposes. In this regard, assessment should provide information on how effective the schools are and ratings made along such lines.
- Helping the child learn at home is not rated high in parents' priorities. After establishing the desired link with the Parent-Teacher Association (PTA), schools should embark on working with the PTA to consolidate this link.
- The goals and objectives of the course work and single lessons set the tone for the teaching and learning process. Therefore, the preparation of lessons before teaching should be emphasized.
- Child-centered and democratic approaches in learning should be encouraged. The pupils perform, understand and apply what they have learned better when they take charge of their own learning. Teaching includes discussions, group work, project work, etc.
- The 880 hours of pupil-contact time, which is recommended but yet to be achieved, should be closely looked into. Afternoon classes in government schools should be thoroughly supervised by the school administration to ensure value for money. DOSE should endeavor to engage a separate cohort of teachers in the afternoon.
- Self-discipline and orderliness should be emphasized. The culture and ethos of our education institutions should be characterized and shaped by a policy addressing school discipline and codes of conduct.
- The upward mobility of teachers in terms of promotion should take cognizance of their performance and qualifications.

- DOSE should institute a school discipline policy and measures to create an orderly learning environment. There should also be recognition of work well done and, on the other hand, sanctions for defiance.

In conclusion, it is important to recognize that while the same conditions are neither possible (nor even desirable) to replicate across different types of schools, and that the exact the mix of inputs and processes are difficult to determine, this study reaffirms that many of the generally acknowledged school effectiveness factors as well the school improvement processes mentioned in the literature appear to contribute to the better performance of Gambian private schools relative to public schools.

1. Introduction and background

The main thrust of the Gambia's education policy from 1988 to 2003 revolved around access, quality and relevance. Since 1988, when the gross enrolment ratio (GER) was 50%, the government of the Gambia has been gravely concerned about the number of children that were unable to gain access to the formal school system. Poor quality delivery of education and a curriculum that was not wholly relevant and responsive to the needs and experiences of Gambians compounded the low enrolment rate.

The Department of State for Education, therefore, dedicated the best part of the policy period to access, quality and relevance and recognized the need to invest in education. Increasing the existing level of education would boost the quality of education and increase the level of participation in the labor market. Thus, the development needs of the country, as contained in the national vision statement – Vision 2020 – among other things, call for the creation of a “well-educated, trained, skilled, healthy, self-reliant and enterprising population.”

At present, the Gambia is one of the few countries in Sub-Saharan Africa that can boast a GER of 85% (2001) which, to a considerable degree, is due to the interventions and policies adopted since 1998. However, this high enrolment rate has an impact on the overall quality of educational service delivery, thus requiring that the provision of quality basic education be accorded a high priority.

Despite the gains made in attaining the central objectives of the policy, there are still major challenges and constraints in implementation. These include inadequate resources (human, capital and material), which are consequently affecting various attempts to curb dropout and repetition rates and to increase completion rates. This has impacted seriously on teacher morale and performance in the

attainment of quality learning outcomes.

Since the Jomtien conference on education (1990), the resolve to attain education for all by 2015, has been further strengthened. The Gambia's education policy 1988-2003 has as one of its objectives the provision of nine years of uninterrupted quality basic education for all children. The Gambia, being one of the few countries envisaged to achieve education for all by 2015, has been selected for the Fast Track Initiative, with the objective of addressing the problem of quality basic education, gender equity, teacher efficiency, and the reduction of illiteracy rates.

The DOSE has overall policy responsibility for the provision of the full range of education services. The formal system consists of six years of lower basic, three years of upper basic and three years of senior secondary schooling, followed by three years of continuing education at tertiary institutions or four years at the university level. The first nine years of education constitute the basic education cycle, which is mainly provided by government, while the senior secondary, technical and vocational, and tertiary and university education are funded largely through a grant-in-aid arrangement and the private sector.

Through the Education Master Plan (1997-2006), programs have been implemented to meet the targets set for the attainment of the goals for the basic education cycle; these include:

- Provision of quality basic education;
- Reduction of illiteracy rates by about 50%;
- Achievement of gender equity in primary and secondary enrolment by 2005;
- Enhancement of the quality and efficiency of teachers;
- Enhanced financing of education sector programs.

The curriculum and learning materials have been a concern for the sector, teachers and parents alike. Hence the curriculum at the level of basic education has been revised, with emphasis on strengthening school-based assessment and making the curriculum more relevant to the learning needs of children.

At the upper basic and senior secondary levels, the West African Examinations Council (WAEC), in collaboration with the Standards and Quality Assurance Directorate (SQAD) and the schools, are responsible for conducting a Continuous Assessment (CA), which accounts for 30% of the Gambia Basic Education Certificate Examinations (GABECE) and West African Senior Secondary Certificate Examinations (WASSCE).

In supporting the implementation of the above strategy, the pre-service training of teachers at the levels of Primary Teachers Certificate (PTC) and Higher Teachers Certificate (HTC) has been intensified. A new training strategy utilizing a combination of distance learning and face-to-face learning on campus was adopted in September 1999, thus increasing the duration of in-field training. In the intake for teacher training at Gambia College, the PTC was doubled, and HTC was increased fivefold. A well-structured in-service training model has also been developed using both school-based and cluster-based approaches.

Notwithstanding the gains in access to basic education over the past five years, there is growing demand for improvement in the learning achievements of children, which were met by only 10% and 7% of Grade 4 students in English and mathematics respectively (DOSE, 2000a). Such alarmingly low achievement levels were worst in rural schools.

There is a critical need to focus more attention on quality education, especially at the basic level. During the first half of the policy period, there were no targets set for learning outcomes, and the only available measure of achievement was the success rate of individual schools and candidates at selective entrance examinations at the end of Grades 6 and 9. Recently benchmarks have been drawn up to clearly define learning outcomes at the lower basic level for quality assessment. The annual National Assessment Test (NAT), using a sample of 25% of pupils in Grades 3 and 5, is now institutionalized to inform the system on pupils' performance at the lower basic level.

Based on the benchmarks, the study on Monitoring of Learning Achievement was conducted in 2000, with the aim of assessing children's learning achievement and the conditions that may influence learning.

The MLA investigated the learning achievements in the core subjects of a sample of Grade 4 pupils in Gambian lower basic schools, with the aim of establishing pupils' mastery levels based on benchmarks designed from the curriculum. Monitoring of Learning Achievement research is anticipated to be one of the instruments to inform policy on appropriate measures to ensure quality. With the phasing out of the Primary School Leaving Certificate Examination (PSLCE), which was limited in a number of ways, as it was designed strictly for purposes of selection, the MLA emerged as an answer to the search for a more scientific and formative way of assessing children's learning achievements and the conditions that may influence learning.

The methodology included stratified and random sampling procedures that used a sample of 2394 pupils from 64 schools (of which two were private) 86 Grade 4 teachers (of which two were from private schools) and 2401 parents. Learning achievement targets were designed for Grade 4 in the core subject areas, and the same test instrument was administered to all schools. Questionnaires were administered to all head teachers, teachers, parents of pupils in the survey, and the pupils themselves, with the aim of determining the factors that may influence pupils' learning achievement. The schools' locations were stratified according to rural, rural-urban and urban, and the school-type was divided into private, mission and government.

The findings of the study were alarming. The overwhelming majority of pupils (70%) did not achieve mastery levels of the curriculum. Private schools performed better than the mission and government schools. The mean scores in English were 81% for private, 46% for mission and 37% for government, whereas for mathematics, the corresponding mean scores were 72%, 44% and 39% respectively.

Similar trends were found in social and environmental studies, and science. Urban pupils outperformed rural pupils on all tests. Boys also outperformed girls on most tests.

Methodology of the current study

Due to the limited data on the private schools in the MLA research, this study includes seven additional private schools and 25 additional teachers from all the private schools. Using the original MLA 2000 data, together with the additional data from the fieldwork conducted, the study investigates quality factors in private schools, aimed at serving as a follow-up to the Monitoring of Learning Achievement survey.

It further investigates the conditions of teaching and learning at both school and classroom levels as well as home factors of students in the private schools used in the MLA study. The aim is to determine those conditions and processes that may contribute to the poor performance in government and mission schools and the high performance in the private schools.

The methodology used in this study includes:

- *Quantitative reanalysis of the MLA data by school type.* Reanalysis of the MLA data to determine the school conditions that may influence learning by school type, which was a gap in the MLA study. This research analyzes in-depth the effectiveness factors present in the private schools, based on family background and support, teacher experience and qualification, availability of teaching and learning materials, teaching and assessment methods and financial cost of attending a private school.
- *Qualitative study of private schools.* The MLA 2000 study did not administer any of the school questionnaires or in-depth interviews at any private schools. The follow-up study involved a series of interviews with school stakeholders focusing on the following school effectiveness factors:
 - School finance and the availability of resources;
 - School leadership;

- Monitoring and supervision;
- Culture of learning in the school;
- Teacher incentive;
- Student attitude;
- Teacher morale and training;
- Community links.

The study provides a detailed analysis of the factors in the private schools that foster higher learning achievement. It helps identify the conditions of teaching and learning, the leadership and management styles, the level of community participation and commitment that aids effective learning. It is envisaged that this study will serve as a foundation for the improvement of quality in the system as a whole.

This study would further inform policy, since the Gambia is on the verge of preparing a new fifteen-year education policy, starting in 2004. Reviews conducted at the mid-term and at the tail end of the previous policy period revealed that the quality of education, especially at the government basic level schools, leaves much to be desired. This is manifested clearly in the MLA report and the West African Examination Council report of the Primary School Leaving Certificate Examination, in which the private schools are at the top of the performance ladder. This study would therefore be a contributing element in the design of the next education policy, whose principal objective would be the provision of quality basic education for all by 2015.

The report will be a useful tool to inform the system on those school-effectiveness factors present in the private schools that are contributing to their high performance. It will bring out information on the kind of support government should focus on in its schools to help create the environment for high performance.

Since the MLA report showed clearly all the country's educational strengths and weaknesses, the survey report would also be useful information for regional directors to address the problems faced by the regions in terms of education effectiveness. Inspectors, regional

training officers as well as teacher trainers will find the report useful in identifying areas to be focused on in inspection and monitoring, and in-service and pre-service training.

The lessons gained from the study of private schools may also help in strengthening public/private/community partnership in all schools.

2. Literature review: investigating quality factors in private schools

Introduction

The literature review is substantially based on the works of Heneveld and Craig (1996) on quality of primary education in Sub-Saharan Africa. Their work has brought together findings on school effectiveness and school improvement movements from the United States, the United Kingdom, Australia, Canada and the Netherlands. The findings go further to identify the characteristics of excellent schools and elements outside the school that aid school improvement.

Improving student learning achievement is the major goal by which school effectiveness is judged. Much of the research on school-effectiveness factors has come from the school effectiveness and school improvement movements. A third approach to research in this area has used survey methods to identify good schools and then studied school-level variables in those schools (Dalin et al., 1992).

Research on school effectiveness factors

Research from the school effectiveness movement emphasizes the use of quantitative analytic techniques to determine how much of the students' academic achievement can be explained by different inputs. Such an approach includes strategies from educators and economists. Among educators, the emphasis has been on the factors that are most important in determining school achievement, weighing the factors in terms of "significance." On the other hand, economists weigh factors as well as search for the "least cost" mix of inputs for producing a given level of student learning. The results of this research have been used to argue for investments in those

inputs, alone or in combination.

In the United States, the Effective Schools Movement began in the 1960s. From this period to 1976, only descriptive studies of individual effective schools were produced. British researchers in the 1970s identified a range of practices that were thought to improve student achievement regardless of socio-economic background. Although British and American researchers have suggested a list of slightly different school effectiveness factors, the most common process and organizational factors are as follows:

▪ **Process factors:**

- Clear goals and high expectations;
- Collaborative planning and collegial relationship;
- Sense of community;
- Order and discipline;
- Flexibility and autonomy.

▪ **Organizational factors:**

- Strong parent and community support;
- Effective support from the education system;
- Adequate resources;
- School-wide staff development;
- Effective leadership;
- A capable teaching force;
- Maximized learning time;
- Variety in teaching time;
- Curriculum articulation and organization;
- School-wide recognition of academic success;
- Staff stability;
- Frequent, well-supervised homework.

During the early 1970s, studies in developing countries similar to those undertaken in the United States and United Kingdom concerning factors that affect student achievement were reported (Schiefelbein and Farrell 1973) in Chile and then Uganda (Heyneman 1976); these studies are quoted by Heneveld and Craig (1996). Results from these and many of those that followed showed a marked dif-

ference between developing and industrial nations in the importance of school-related factors on student achievement. The quality of the school (in-school variables) seemed to influence student achievement more in developing nations than in industrialized nations, where school quality was overshadowed by the child's socio-economic status/family background (out-of-school variables).

In reviewing most recent studies from developing countries, sponsored by United States Agency for International Development (USAID), Levin and Lockheed (1993) summarized school effectiveness factors as:

- **Necessary basic inputs:**
 - Instructional materials such as textbooks, supplementary teachers' guides and materials, library books, etc.;
 - A curriculum with appropriate scope and sequence and content related to pupils' experience;
 - Time for learning (the number and length of school days);
 - Teaching practices (active student learning to include discussion, group work, etc.).
- **Facilitating conditions:**
 - Community involvement, to include good school/community relations and parental involvement in the school;
 - School-based professionalism, to include leadership by the head teacher, collegiality and commitment, accountability through assessment and supervision, and support;
 - Flexibility relevant to pupil curricula, adjustments in level and pace, organizational flexibility to include school clusters, multi-grade teaching, and pedagogical flexibility, to include teaching innovations;
 - The will to act—to have vision and use decentralized, school-based solutions to problems (Lockheed and Verspoor, 1991).

While these school effectiveness factors are similar to those identified in studies in industrial nations, other factors found to be important in developing countries include adequate materials and support for teachers and students, an appropriate language of instruction and

healthy students. Effectiveness factors should be viewed as potential contributors to school quality. Factors interact to reinforce each other, work together and improve student achievement. The difficulty in analyzing data and replicating studies of the complex interplay among factors affecting school effectiveness makes uncertain the empirical base for generalized conclusions about what makes a school effective. However, the common findings across settings and using different analytic techniques suggest that effective schools are characterized by the factors identified previously.

Research on school improvement factors

Research from the school improvement movement, while drawing on the school effectiveness model, emphasizes the process change in schools. As such, the research methods used have tended to be qualitative, relying on open-ended interviews and observations.

The strength of school improvement research lies in its concentration on how change occurs in school systems. It tends to be holistic and action-oriented, often proposing improvement strategies that seek to achieve long-term goals. Huberman and Miles (1984), and Fullan (1991) identified some key themes on school improvement:

- Effective leadership;
- Shared vision-building and support of school improvement permeating the organization at both the school and district levels;
- Commitment and acceptance of school improvement efforts;
- Active initiation and participation;
- Changes in behavior and belief;
- Collaborative planning and decision-making;
- Organizational policies, support for action and press for improvement;
- Staff development and resource assistance;
- Monitoring efforts for accountability and improvement;
- Recognition for jobs well done.

The school improvement tradition has had less impact on educational research in developing countries than research on school effective-

ness. Dalin et al. (1992) contended that the only extensive application of this approach has been the reforms in Bangladesh, Columbia and Ethiopia. However, many more recent quality improvement efforts worldwide have tried to blend the two approaches.

Advantages of blending the qualitative and quantitative approaches

School improvement research (qualitative approach) identifies factors that facilitate the change process in schools, and the research results often confirm the findings of school effectiveness research (quantitative approach) and provide insights into how to implement change.

Both approaches look at the problem of how to make schools effective from different perspectives that complement each other. Thus, if education planners and policy-makers are to make use of the findings that are common to both traditions, they need a conceptual framework that integrates them into a form that can be used for program planning. The conceptual framework developed identifies 18 key factors that influence student outcomes:

1. Supporting inputs

- Strong parent and community support;
- Effective support from the education system;
- Adequate material support:
 - Frequent and appropriate teacher development activities;
 - Sufficient textbooks and other materials;
 - Adequate facilities.

2. Enabling conditions

- Effective leadership;
- A capable teaching force;
- Flexibility and autonomy;
- High time on task in school.

3. School climate

- High expectations of students;
- Positive teacher attitudes;

- Order and discipline;
 - Organized curriculum;
 - Rewards and incentives.
- 4. Teaching/learning process**
- High learning time;
 - Variety in teaching strategies;
 - Frequent homework;
 - Frequent student assessment and feedback.
- 5. Student outcomes**
- Participation;
 - Academic achievement;
 - Social skills;
 - Economic success.
- 6. Contextual factors**
- International;
 - Cultural;
 - Political;
 - Economic.

The characteristics of effective schools that affect student outcomes, and the student outcomes they influence, are embedded in an institutional, cultural, social, and political context that greatly influences how school factors interact with each other and how effective a school can become (Chubb and Moe, 1990). Institutionally, the nature of the administrative structure over the school, the level of democratization and professionalism in the system, its resources, and other factors condition how a school functions. In developing countries, including those in Africa, cultural and social norms influence the schools' functioning even more than in the industrial countries, because the school is an imported institution. The community can be supportive or hostile towards the school. Ethnic, linguistic and social differences can constrain interaction among students and between students and teachers. Teaching methods, subject matter, school head teacher and teacher–pupil relations are sensitive to these norms. Politics can also influence school quality by, for example, hampering the schools' operation during times of political strife or by groups in different regions in a country. All of these factors, ex-

ternal to the school, condition how effective a school can become. Public policy therefore needs to pay attention to them.

In conclusion, therefore, the findings of research from the school effectiveness and the school improvement traditions have been integrated to select and define those factors that we concluded determine the quality of education in Sub-Saharan Africa. The resulting conceptual framework summarizes this integration with definitions and indicators for each factor that has been derived from the literature. This work has been done with African schools in mind, but one must still apply this framework to the African school setting with caution, because the amount of actual research in the developing world, and particularly in Africa, upon which the framework is based, is limited.

Research on school effectiveness factors, school environmental factors and pupils' learning outcomes in West Africa

Not many studies on school effectiveness factors and students learning outcomes have been carried out in the developing countries, especially in Sub-Saharan Africa. Many universities in the developing countries, particularly in Sub-Saharan Africa, conduct research mainly for academic reasons. The research division of WAEC has in recent years carried out studies on school effectiveness factors and pupils' performance.

The Accra Department of Research Division, Ghana (WAEC, 1998) studied trends in Senior Secondary School Certificate Examinations (SSSCE) students' performance in WAEC exams in Ghana. Observed low performance in exams/tests had been contended to be due to "some factors resident in schools," among others. The study revealed that schools require some basic facilities, which include school buildings, relevant books and other instructional materials. These have to be adequate and in good condition for schools to function properly. Unfortunately, there is hardly any senior secondary school that can boast of adequate quantities of these basic facilities. According to the

study, resources, human and materials are not equitably distributed among schools in Ghana. Thus some schools remain perpetually as “grade one” schools and others as “grade three.”

“Grade one” schools are effective schools, consistently performing better than “grade three” schools; this is because effectiveness factors present in “grade one” schools are absent in “grade three” schools.

In another study (WAEC, 2000) carried out by the Lagos Department of the Research Division (1998) the features of a good school environment were identified. The study (PPL/2/98) revealed that school environment is vital to students’ performance, highlighting that most of the studies on environment and learning carried out in Nigeria have not been conclusive.

The study investigated the effects of environmental factors on students’ performance on the SSSCE, revealing that students in schools considered to be “good” performed significantly better than those in “poor” schools, with better environments associated with improved performances. The study also confirmed that features of a good school environment are significantly related to performance in English language and mathematics.

In the Gambia, the MLA study carried out by DOSE and SQAD was part of the country’s Education for All assessment. It assessed the levels of learning achievements/outcomes accomplished by pupils in Grade 4 in the four core subjects of maths, English, social and environmental studies, and general science. The Gambian study also looked at some school and home factors and their effect on pupils’ performance. Factors such as unavailability of teaching and learning materials, poor school facilities and teacher qualifications were identified as critical to pupils’ learning outcomes. These findings are generally in line with those in Nigeria, Ghana and industrialized countries.

It is therefore important to investigate the conditions of teaching and learning at both school and classroom levels to determine those con-

ditions and processes that may contribute to the poor performance in the government and mission schools and the high performance in the private schools.

Quality in the Gambian education system has not yet been assessed systematically, using factors from the school effectiveness or school improvement movements. The Gambia has also not yet defined quality schools. However, attempts have been made by few studies to assess student performance against a certain benchmark (DOSE, 2000b and 2003) and the effects of PTA involvement in school management on school performance (Educational Research Network for West And Central Africa [ERNWACA], 2000). The quality inputs in which the government invested in the 1990s have also been enumerated (PER, 1998, 2001; Revised Education Policy, 1998-2003). In the recently conducted 2002 National Assessment Tests, the performance of students, by region and school type, in the four core subjects of mathematics, general science, social and environmental studies and English language showed that Region 1 had the best performance, with a mean of 48.31 in English, 38.70 in science, 35.55 in social and environmental studies, and 35.24 in mathematics, followed by Region 2. Only Regions 1 and 2 performed above the national means in all the core subjects. Analyses of performance also indicated that pupils in private schools performed significantly better than their colleagues in mission and government schools and, as was found in the MLA study, only a small number of pupils were able to score within the mastery level of 70%. The vast majority of pupils' performance in all the four core subjects was below mastery level learning.

3. Quantitative investigation

This section of the study focuses on the re analysis of the quantitative data obtained from the MLA study, with additional data collection and analysis of the data by including family background, teacher experience and qualifications, teaching and assessment method. It also investigates additional dimensions by re analyzing the data by school type. The original sample sizes for the school questionnaires included only two private schools, and thus the responses from the two head teachers could not allow for significant analysis. Questionnaires were administered in seven additional schools covering three teachers in each school. The current analysis now captures nine private schools and 27 teachers.

Background factors

School location

The provision of education to the citizenry of a country is predominantly a government responsibility. However, the demand for education far exceeds its supply, and hence the fulfillment of the right for every citizen to education cannot now be met entirely by government. The basic rationale for private pressure on the public education system is to provide options to individuals in a free market economy. Private schools levy charges to meet their operational costs, and hence their location is determined by financial viability rather than social or equity reasons. It is therefore not surprising to find all the private schools in the Gambia located in urban areas. Mission schools have been traditionally grounded in the spreading of religious beliefs. It was logical for the missionaries' participation in the delivery of educational services to start from the urban areas before venturing into the hinterlands. As a result, 41% of parents in urban areas send their children to mission schools. Nevertheless, mission schools have also spread through out the country, and consequently 37% of parents in rural communities and 23% in rural

towns have their children in mission schools. Since government schools target the poor, as well as deprived communities, offering equitable distribution of educational opportunities, 14% of parents in urban areas send their children to government schools, compared to 47% and 39% in rural areas and rural towns respectively.

Table 1. Location of schools by school type

School type		Location of school			Total
		Urban	Rural	Rural-Town	
government	% within school type	14.26	46.57	39.17	100
mission	% within school type	40.60	36.70	22.71	100
private	% within school type	100			100
Total	% within school type	21.12	43.65	35.24	100

Family background and support

The Gambia is a secular state; about 95% of its inhabitants are Muslims. Even though, at the primary level, all the mission schools are managed by the various Christian denominations, the majority of students in mission schools are from Muslim families. Faith does not deter, nor is it an obstacle, to enrolment in mission schools. It should be noted here that mission schools are supported by government through a grant that covers staff salaries. The government also finances the construction of classroom facilities. Thus, mission schools are subject to the same regulations as public schools in terms of fees levied on students. The cost burden of education is a deterrent to enrolment and choice of school type; the poorer the family, the less likely it is that its children attend private schools. One's level of educational attainment and occupation has a direct bearing on one's income earning and hence the choice of school type.

Only 3% of mothers in the sample survey had post-secondary education and 14% had a secondary education, compared to 33% who had no formal education. Forty-one percent of mothers had local Islamic (or Dara) education, and 8% stopped at the primary level. In comparison, 6% of fathers were reported to have post-secondary education, 18% had secondary education and 5% had primary edu-

cation. However, 22% had no formal education while 48% had local Islamic education. This low academic attainment reflects on their occupations: 52% of mothers are housewives and 32% are engaged in farming (including fishing) and petty trading. Only 7% of them are professionals (public servants, teachers or doctors, lawyers etc.), and 8% are engaged in business or other skilled trades. Of the fathers, 27% are professional, 30% are engaged in petty trading, skilled labor or business, while 44% are farmers, including fishermen.

Table 2. Highest academic qualification of parents by gender and school type

School type	% within school type	Highest academic qualification of mother/female guardian						Total
		No formal schooling	Local Islamic school (Dara)	Primary school	Secondary Four	Post Secondary school training	College/ University	
government	% male	21.94	52.99	4.99	15.36	0.93	3.79	100
	% female	33.07	46.93	8.14	9.93	0.71	1.21	100
mission	% male	25.66	31.58	5.92	31.58	0.99	4.28	100
	% female	40	24.76	7.94	23.17	0.32	3.81	100
private	% male		9.62		32.7	5.77	51.92	100
	% female	1.96	1.96	3.92	64.7	11.76	15.69	100
Total	% male	21.94	48.28	5.00	18.5	1.08	5.22	100
	% female	33.41	41.68	7.98	13.87	0.96	2.10	100

Educational attainment is instrumental in contributing to higher incomes for individuals. It can be observed that illiteracy is higher for female parents and while only 2% of female illiterate parents could afford sending their children to private schools, 33% and 40% of them send their children to government and mission schools respectively. Conversely, the majority of parents with post-secondary and university educations tend to send their children to private schools. Among parents with post-secondary and university educations, 85% send their children to private schools, while the rest have their wards in government and mission schools. It would appear that the higher one's academic attainment, the more one is likely to send children to private schools. Parents' academic attainment and occupation impact on the ability to bear the burden of educational expenses. For example, while all parents with children in private schools provide

transport for their wards, only 14% and 28% could afford to do so in the government and mission schools respectively.

Teacher experience and qualification

The majority of heads in private schools are female (67%) while those in government and mission schools are male (81% and 67% respectively). Situations in rural settlements, where living conditions are harsher, are different from those in urban areas. With only 21% of schools in urban areas and the natural tendency for males to assume more demanding responsibilities or have greater potential to withstand harsher living conditions, the domination of male heads in government schools is not unexpected. The national representation of the gender divide amply demonstrates this trend (28% female and 72% male).

Table 3. Sex of head teacher

School type		Sex of Head Teacher		Total
		Male	Female	
government	% within school type	80.85	19.15	100
mission	% within school type	66.67	33.33	100
private	% within school type	33.33	66.67	100
Total	% within school type	72.31	27.69	100

In order to provide any meaningful professional support to the staff, head teachers are expected to be both academically and professionally qualified. Whereas in government and mission schools the majority of head teachers have Secondary 4 (50%) and GCE ‘O’ level (47%) as their highest qualification, the highest academic qualification of a head in private schools is GCE ‘O’ levels, and not a single head in this category has a Secondary 4 qualification.

Table 4. Highest academic and professional qualification of head teachers

School type		Highest academic qualification of head teacher				Highest professional qualification of head teacher			
		Secondary Four	GCE O' Level	GCE A' Level	Degree	PTC	HTC	Diplo- ma	Degree
government	% within sch. type	50	47.83		2.17	93.62	2.13	2.13	2.13
mission	% within sch type	50	37.5		12.5	88.89			11.11
private	% within sch type	62.5	12.5	25	100	33.33	33.33	22.22	11.11
Total	% within sch type	43.55	48.39	1.61	6.45	84.62	6.15	4.62	4.62

In terms of highest professional qualification, the majority of head teachers in both government and mission schools have PTC as their highest professional qualification. In the private schools, however, 33% have HTC as their highest qualification. In this category too, 11% have university degrees, while only one out of 47 teachers in the government schools has a degree.

Teacher attitudes

Parents' and society's perception of teachers' attitudes is relevant to quality education. Parents may express dissatisfaction with teachers' attitudes toward punctuality. Overall, 70% of parents have expressed dissatisfaction with teachers' attitudes as a result of teacher absenteeism. Of that number, 87% of them have their children in private schools, compared to 65% of those with wards in the government schools. Lateness was also reportedly high (67%), among teachers nationally, with 86% of parents with wards either in private or mission schools expressing dissatisfaction with teachers' lateness, compared to 63% of those with children in government schools. It would appear that parents with children in government schools are less concerned about teachers' attitudes than those with children in mission and private schools.

Table 5. Parents' dissatisfaction with teachers' attitudes

School type		Parents' dissatisfaction due to teacher lateness		Parents' dissatisfaction due to teacher absenteeism	
		No	Yes	No	Yes
government	% within school type	37.04	62.96	35.03	64.97
mission	% within school type	14.12	85.88	10.11	89.89
private	% within school type	14.29	85.71	13.33	86.67
Total	% within school type	32.57	67.43	30.20	69.80

School conditions

Availability and use of teaching aids and learning materials

Parents may choose a school type based on the availability of teaching and learning resources. Even though facilities are generally better in private schools, 85% of parents whose children attend private schools complained about the inadequacy or low quality of facilities, compared to 50% of parents whose children attend public schools.

Table 6. Parents' dissatisfaction due to inadequate teaching facilities

School type		Parents' dissatisfaction due to inadequate teaching facilities		Total
		No	Yes	
government	% within school type	50.25	49.75	100
mission	% within school type	19.48	80.52	100
private	% within school type	15.38	84.62	100
Total	% within school type	45.16	54.84	100

Chalk and blackboards are the most common teaching resources in developing countries, and their presence in any school can enhance students' learning if used properly. Nationally, 34% of schools do not have adequate chalk supply. All such schools are either govern-

ment or mission schools: private schools do not have problems with chalk supply. However, the supply of blackboards is much better, in that only about 6% of government schools and 11% of mission schools do not have adequate blackboards.

Table 7. Adequacy of blackboards and chalk by school type

School type		Adequacy of Blackboards		Adequacy of Chalk		
		Available	Inadequate	Available	Inadequate	Not Available
government	% within school type	93.62	6.38	59.57	38.30	2.13
mission	% within school type	88.89	11.11	66.67	33.33	
private	% within school type	100		100		
Total	% within school type	93.85	6.15	66.15	32.31	1.54

The availability of teaching and learning materials is a very important factor in improving learning outcomes. The availability of teaching and learning materials in schools helps to enrich the teaching and learning environment. These inputs include teaching syllabi, pupils' books, teachers' guides, dictionaries, vanguarders, computers, rulers etc.

In the MLA study, it could be observed that the government schools are the least endowed with teaching syllabi, pupils' books, teachers' guides and dictionaries. Whereas 89% of private schools have adequate syllabi, only 32% of government and 13% of mission schools have adequate syllabi. A similar trend can be observed with regards to pupils' textbooks. Sixty-seven percent of private schools have adequate pupils' textbooks while 56% of mission and only 40% of government schools have adequate pupils' textbooks.

Table 8. Adequacy of syllabi and pupils' books by school type

School type		Adequacy of syllabi			Adequacy of pupils' books		
		Available	Inade-quate	Not Available	Available	Inade-quate	Not Available
government	% within school type	32.61	34.78	32.61	40.43	53.19	6.38
mission	% within school type	12.5	37.5	50	55.56	33.33	11.11
private	% within school type	88.89	11.11		66.67	33.33	
Total	% within school type	38.1	31.75	30.16	46.15	47.69	6.15

Teachers' guides are in short supply in both government and mission schools (33% of both combined). In the private schools, 89% of schools have adequate teachers' guides. Like other teaching and learning materials, availability of adequate dictionaries and computers is higher in private schools (67%) than government and mission schools, where only 6% and 11% respectively have adequate dictionaries.

Table 9. Adequacy of teachers' guides

School type		Adequacy of teachers' guides		
		Available	Inadequate	Not Available
government	% within school type	32.61	60.87	6.52
mission	% within school type	33.33	55.56	11.11
private	% within school type	88.89	11.11	
Total	% within school type	40.63	53.13	6.25

Table 10. Adequacy of dictionaries and computers by school type

School type		Adequacy of dictionaries			Adequacy of computers		
		Available	Inade-quate	Not Available	Available	Inade-quate	Not Available
government	% within school type	6.38	23.4	70.21	4.26	4.26	91.49
mission	% within school type	11.11	22.22	66.67		12.5	87.5
private	% within school type	66.67	22.22	11.11			
Total	% within school type	15.38	23.08	61.54	3.64	5.45	90.91

The availability of teaching and learning materials in both schools and homes is essential. The availability and utilization of learning materials are positively correlated with learning outcomes and student achievement. Although only 46% of parents provide textbooks for their children, when disaggregated by school type, 41% of parents with children in government schools, 62% in mission schools, and 100% in private schools provide textbooks for their children. This therefore implies that all children in private schools will have textbooks provided by parents, which enhances learning achievements.

Table 11. Provision of textbooks by parents

School Type		Textbooks provided by parents		Total
		No	Yes	
government	% within school type	58.92	41.08	100
mission	% within school type	37.88	62.12	100
private	% within school type		100.00	100
Total	% within school type	53.76	46.24	100

The availability of teaching and learning materials and student access to library and resource centers are critical quality inputs. As far as libraries are concerned, there are no differences between government, mission and private schools: over 61% of all school types in the survey have libraries. However, 50% of the mission schools have a resource centre, while 38% of government and 33% of private schools have resource centers. This implies that the mission schools are more endowed with resource centers than both government and private schools.

Table 12. Availability of library and resource centers

School type		Presence of library		Presence of resource center	
		No	Yes	No	Yes
government	% within school type	38.24	61.76	62.07	37.93
mission	% within school type	37.50	62.50	50.00	50.00
private	% within school type	33.33	66.67	66.67	33.33
Total	% within school type	37.25	62.75	61.36	38.64

Discipline

How a teacher views his or her role in helping to prepare students to be productive citizens is in part a reflection of his or her ideas about behavior and its rewards and consequences. Parents and society expect a lot from schools, and it is not uncommon for some to blame schools for a lack of discipline in children. This study reveals that 78% of parents expressed dissatisfaction with discipline in schools, and there seems to be no significant difference in distribution between the different types of schools. The marginal difference by school type is probably an indication of the seriousness of this concern and how it could positively impact on learning outcomes.

Table 13. Parents' dissatisfaction due to lack of discipline

School Type		Parents' dissatisfaction due to lack of discipline		Total
		No	Yes	
government	% within school type	24.72	75.28	100
mission	% within school type	7.32	92.68	100
private	% within school type	15.38	84.62	100
Total	% within school type	21.75	78.25	100

Teaching and learning

Extra tuition/coaching

Extra teaching and/or coaching is given to children to supplement or complement the learning activities that take place in schools. If this phenomenon were found only in public or mission schools, then one would be tempted to conclude that not enough teaching and learning occurs in these schools. However, extra teaching and coaching is also given to children in private schools, though the duration and mode of administering the teaching/coaching is different. About 16% of parents do not provide extra teaching/coaching for their children, and, of these, only 3% have their wards in private schools, compared to 14% and 25% who have their children in government and mission schools respectively. Of the 71% of parents with children in private schools who provided two hours or more of extra teaching or coaching, 58% have a special teacher or use the services of the class

teacher after school. However, 59% and 51% respectively of parents with children in government or mission schools provide two or more hours of coaching, with only 26% and 36% of them utilizing the services of class teachers after school or a special teacher.

If extra teaching or coaching contributes to learning achievement, the differential impact would be determined by the service providers. Parents with children in private schools rely more on class teachers or special teachers (58% of them) or provide the coaching themselves (30% of them) compared to 26% of parents with children in government schools who utilize class teachers or special teachers, with only 17% of them coaching their children. Parents with children in private schools have a higher academic qualification and might therefore be able to provide better tutoring for their children. Not surprisingly, 57% of parents with children in government schools rely on siblings to provide extra teaching or coaching at home, compared to only 11% of parents with wards in private schools.

Table 14. Amount of extra teaching/coaching children receive per day

School type		Amount of extra teaching/coaching child(ren) receive(s) a day				
		0	1 hour	2 hours	More than 2 hours	None
government	% within school type	0.05	26.87	39.47	19.12	14.49
mission	% within school type		24.31	30.83	20.05	24.81
private	% within school type		25.86	43.10	27.59	3.45
Total	% within school type	0.04	26.40	38.07	19.49	15.99

Table 15. Teaching/coaching provider

School type		Person providing teaching and/or coaching				Total
		Parent	Brothers/sisters	Class teacher after school	Special teacher	
government	% within school type	16.61	56.92	11.91	14.55	100
mission	% within school type	25.00	38.85	7.77	28.38	100
private	% within school type	30.19	11.32	30.19	28.30	100
Total	% within school type	18.30	52.84	11.78	17.09	100

School management

Monitoring and supervision of teachers

Teacher monitoring and supervision by professional teachers in schools can contribute immensely to teacher performance, which could eventually help in improving students' learning outcomes.

Table 16. Regularity in checking teachers' work

School type		Regularity in checking teachers' work			
		Daily	2 to 3 times weekly	Fortnightly	Occasionally
government	% within school type	21.43	42.86	16.67	19.05
mission	% within school type	22.22	66.67	11.11	
private	% within school type	66.67	33.33		
Total	% within school type	28.33	45.00	13.33	13.33

The regularity in checking teachers' work varies according to school type. In government schools, less than half (43%) of the teacher's work is checked two or three times weekly, whereas in both mission and private schools, the teacher's work is checked more often, with 66% of work being checked two or three times a week in both cases. Occasional checking of teachers' work occurs only in government schools.

Professional development and support

In the private schools, seven out of every ten teachers (71%) have a “very cordial” relationship with the head teacher. The proportion of teachers with this type of relationship with their head is also higher in the mission schools (67%) than in government schools (56%). This shows that almost half of the teachers in government schools do not have a cordial relationship with their heads.

Table 17. Teacher’s relationship with head teacher by school type

School type		Teacher’s relationship with head teacher		
		Very cordial	Cordial	Not cordial
government	% within school type	55.56	44.44	
mission	% within school type	66.67	25.00	8.33
private	% within school type	71.43	28.57	
Total	% within school type	60.71	38.39	0.89

With regard to training, which is a critical undertaking in the work of a teacher, there are more teachers in government schools (23%) pursuing any training than those in both mission schools (10%) and private schools (18%). The same trend can be observed with teachers pursuing further qualification in education: 63% are from government schools, none from mission schools, and 23% from private schools.

Table 18. Pursuance of training courses/further qualification in education by teachers

School Type		Pursuing any training course		Pursuing a further qualification in education	
		No	Yes	No	Yes
government	% within school type	76.92	23.08	36.36	63.64
mission	% within school type	90.00	10.00	100	
private	% within school type	82.14	17.86	76.92	23.08
Total	% within school type	79.61	20.39	65.79	34.21

The opportunity to undertake training and pursue further qualification in education is therefore greater among government teachers than their counterparts in both mission and private schools. This could indicate a need for closer examination of the quality of the training being provided to teachers, as it seems to be minimal, although more teachers are receiving training in government schools.

Table 19. Different forms of teacher assistance provided by head teacher

School type		Checking of lesson notes		Suggestions regarding teaching aids		Provision of school-based workshops	
		No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes
government	% within school type	27.50	72.50	16.28	83.72	16.28	83.72
mission	% within school type	37.50	62.50	33.33	66.67	33.33	66.67
private	% within school type	11.11	88.89		100	11.11	88.89
Total	% within school type	26.32	73.68	16.39	83.61	18.03	81.97

The assistance given by head teachers to their teachers, either in the form of checking lesson notes or giving suggestions about teaching aids, contributes to professional development. In both cases, private school teachers benefit more from head teacher assistance than do government and mission school teachers respectively.

School-based professional development has the potential to improve teacher effectiveness and subsequently impact on student performance. The level of head teachers' assistance in the form of school-based workshops is encouraging (government 84%, missions 67% and private 89%). However, the high frequency of school-based workshops in government schools has not produced the expected results in student performance. It is therefore important to revisit the

quality of such workshops in government schools especially as they relate to students learning achievement.

Just over half (54%) of all schools were visited at least once a term by education school inspectors. Government schools were visited more frequently (64%) than either mission and private schools. It is interesting to note that despite the low level of inspection of mission and private schools, their performance in the MLA was better than government schools. However, mission or private schools are under their own management structures, and independent monitoring and supervision systems can help to explain the inconsistency.

Table 20. Frequency of education inspectors' visits by school type

School type		Frequency of education inspectors' visits			
		Termly	Annually	Rarely	Never
government	% within school type	63.83	14.89	14.89	6.38
mission	% within school type	33.33	11.11	44.44	11.11
private	% within school type	22.22	22.22	44.44	11.11
Total	% within school type	53.85	15.38	23.08	7.69

4. Qualitative investigation

In the literature review, the concept of quality is discussed by both the school effective and school improvement movements. The review highlighted the advantage of blending the qualitative and quantitative approaches in conducting research on school quality.

This section discusses the effects of these factors vis-à-vis the quality of the school. It focuses on organizational factors, as well as the “necessary inputs” and “facilitating conditions,” which may contribute to school effectiveness and high student achievement.

Teaching and learning

Two private schools were visited in which classroom observations were undertaken. This section discusses the observations made after a total of eight lessons across the grade levels in two of the schools (shown in *Annex 1*).

The teachers in the private schools visited had prepared their teaching records, schemes and lesson notes and, because of this, they taught with enthusiasm and confidence. The teachers within the same grade level prepared their lessons and schemes together, collaborated in brainstorming, and the use of resources and methodology.

The lessons observed were all linked to previous lessons, which indicated continuity and progression in the teaching and learning process. Pupils being called to the chalkboard to try out challenging work, together with the rest of the class, complemented the inputs given by the teachers. This helped in the learning process, as most pupils demonstrated that they could learn from their peers.

Pupils’ gains in terms of learning achievement are a major goal by which school effectiveness is judged. The teachers made sure that for most of the time, the pupils, took care of their own learning and were fully engaged. The quiet ones among them were eventually drawn into the lesson.

In 90% of the classes visited, the methods employed by the teachers suited the ability and age range of the pupils. They worked in peer groups and engaged in writing, drawing, measuring and other forms of practical work. This flexibility is a process factor that determines the effectiveness of any lesson.

The availability of learning materials was evident, and the materials assisted the learning process. In the classes observed, the pupils had materials in addition to basic textbooks and notebooks. The school recommended the course books and supplementary readers. There were also resources provided by the children's parents in the form of rulers, mathematical set boxes, vocabulary books and a book exclusively for homework or for extra instruction.

Apart from the applications executed by the pupils towards the end of the lessons, periodic tests were given to them, and these were seen in their notebooks. The assessment records in all the classes visited indicated that frequent student assessment had been taking place and feedback given by the teachers. The pupils in all the classes were encouraged to correct their work and were interested in their achievements.

The pupils in one of the schools have extra instruction organized by the school. This takes place after school following a two-hour break. During this period, the class teachers reinforce work done in the morning. This efficient utilization of time is an important factor in the school's effectiveness and is evident in the teaching and learning process. The pupils in this school have more school contact time than their counterparts in government schools.

The climate of order and discipline evident in the private schools is ideal for effective teaching and learning and was observed in almost all the classes visited. The relationship between the teachers and pupils was cordial and friendly, and pupils raised their hands to be allowed to speak.

Class size, averaging 38, was an observable difference between these and government schools. It was also a factor, which one teach-

er explained, in adapting the curriculum for the different abilities of the children.

In one of the schools, the teachers at the upper level teach according to their area of specialization. The students here have the opportunity to interact with various personalities as well as specialists in their field.

Analysis and discussion

This section discusses the observations made during the class visits, focusing on preparation of lessons, teaching strategies, assessment, discipline and orderliness; it concludes with some recommendations.

Preparation of lessons

The teacher's preparation of lesson plans is a vital factor in the teaching and learning process. It determines the focus and objective(s) of the lesson. The private schools visited ensured that the teachers documented the schemes and lesson plans of the curriculum to be delivered. It was clear that the teachers were alert, prepared and ready to deliver their planned lessons. The level of monitoring by the senior teachers was evident from their signatures on the schemes and lesson notebooks of the teachers; it also indicated a high level of commitment, which encouraged this kind of preparation.

The SQAD report (DOSE 2002) confirmed that in most of the public schools schemes and lesson plans are regularly prepared. It can therefore be argued that the absence of sanctions on teachers in public schools who do not document their plans could be the cause of their laxity, resulting in poorly presented lessons and poor performance by the pupils.

The availability of resources in private school classrooms helped the teaching and learning process. It is expected that the pupils will have all the tools they need, including those required for practical and project work. These students are likely to perform better than

those who struggle for basic resources such as notebooks, textbooks and pencils and whose teachers are without cardboard and markers to prepare charts, games etc.

Teaching strategies

The teaching strategies employed by the teachers in the schools in this study are an indication of how well the students will learn. The shift from the lecture method, which focuses the teacher as the “retainer of all knowledges,” to the interactive method, which encourages the full participation of the pupils, has ensured that the learners are actively involved in their own learning.

Pupils were more confident in expressing themselves, and coupled with the motivation provided by the teachers, most of the lessons were well understood. This was evident from the oral responses of the pupils and their work later in the lesson. There is no doubt that the methods employed by the teachers were effective.

Assessment

Assessment, as a form of monitoring of the teaching and learning process, is frequently carried out in the form of tests, class work and homework assignments. These frequent student assessments and feedback are undoubtedly factors that have contributed to the high performance of the pupils.

Extra contact time for the pupils during their “study period” (extra instruction) in the afternoons in school, as seen in one school, definitely has some impact on performance. There is a correlation between extra classes and high performance, as shown by the higher performance achieved by the private schools, most of which have either extra contact time in the schools or at home with private tutors.

Discipline and orderliness

The pupils in the private schools manifest self-discipline in the way they speak to their teachers and in the way they dress and comport themselves at work. The high level of discipline and orderliness ob-

served in the classrooms is an indication that good behavior is being instilled in the pupils. This helps create an environment conducive to learning and has an impact on the pupils' comportment, dedication and ultimately their performance.

Recommendations

In our quest to enable our pupils to perform well and achieve higher standards, it is recommended that the following be adopted:

- The goals and objective(s) of the course work and single lessons set the tone for the teaching and learning process. The preparation of lessons before teaching should be emphasized.
- The availability of teaching and learning resources, which is an important factor in the delivery of the curriculum, should be given high priority. The DOSE should ensure this by increasing the budgetary allocation to learning materials for public schools.
- Child-centered and democratic approaches in learning should be encouraged. The pupils better perform, understand and apply what they have learned when they take charge of their own learning. Teaching should include discussions, group work, project work, and other interactive methods.
- The 880 hours of pupil contact time, which is recommended but yet to be achieved, should be closely looked into. The afternoon classes in government schools should be thoroughly supervised by the school administration to ensure value for money. DOSE should endeavor to engage a separate cohort of teachers in the afternoon.
- Self-discipline and orderliness should be emphasized. The culture and ethos of our educational institutions should be characterized and shaped by a policy addressing school discipline and codes of conduct.
- The upward mobility of teachers in terms of promotion should take into account their performance.
- Schools should also establish a discipline policy and measures to create an orderly learning environment. There should also be recognition of work well done and sanctions for defiance.

Teachers

Introduction

Six teachers participated in this study, and the questions they answered were intended to gain information on: their backgrounds; the availability of resources in their schools; issues on staff motivation and incentives; learning and teaching strategies; management, support and supervision; and their general reflections. All the interviews were structured and conducted individually from April 2-3, 2003, in two selected private schools in the Greater Banjul Area.

Of the six participants, four were Gambians and two Sierra Leoneans. Although five of them began their careers as untrained teachers, they all received formal training to become qualified teachers. In addition, they each benefited from in-service training, which they all considered useful. Since none of them has a degree, the quality of these teachers is comparable to the qualified teachers in government and mission schools. One of them, for instance, went through the upgrading course, as many government teachers did.

However, even though they may have started off in either government or mission schools, they had eventually decided to work in private schools. The reasons for this decision were consequently a matter of interest to the interviewers. Below are the findings based on the information elicited.

Findings

School choice

The factors that influenced the respondents' decision to opt for private schools varied. They ranged from uncertainty about the security of their jobs in government schools as unqualified teachers to the challenges and keen competition that contributed to the rich experiences and ideas they could gather at a private school. The key contributing factors they cited included the incentives they enjoyed, the degree of discipline maintained, the commitment of staff, the strong leadership demonstrated by the head teachers, and the support, interest and participation of the parents in school matters. The

frequency of staff transfer without the teachers' consent, especially to schools up-country, surfaced as a strong disincentive to teaching in government.

The working conditions and school environment were also significant factors. Class sizes of about 40 pupils made work much easier and desirable in mission and private schools than in government schools, where classes could comprise 50 or more pupils. Discipline was considered very bad in government schools, where pupils were perceived to be more carefree, rowdy and neglected.

Even though the salary structure in the private schools may not always be vastly different from government's, the fees paid by the pupils for extra instruction – provided by their class teachers after normal school hours – supplemented the teachers' earnings tremendously. Therefore, although some teachers organized such classes at home, many held them in their school under the supervision of the head teacher. Rent and transport allowances were paid to them, as in government schools, but one of the respondents claimed that there were cases in which one's salary was linked to one's qualifications, which did not exist in public schools.

None of the schools had a loan scheme, but teachers were at liberty to subscribe to the scheme run by the Gambia Teachers' Union, who offered such services to all teachers without discrimination.

Notwithstanding the edge they claimed over their colleagues in public schools, the interviewees wanted more fringe benefits, for example, in medical cover and prizes for performance. A teacher in one of the private schools claimed that his children were attending the school where he worked free of charge, another teacher at the same school expressed his desire for such a policy, leading to the inference that the school had either a differential policy for its teachers or that not all of them were aware of the policy.

Resources

Overall, the teachers expressed satisfaction with the resources provided by the schools. They described their classrooms as “well

resourced,” to the extent that each child had the required textbooks, especially for the core subjects. Although the head teachers motivated them to purchase instructional materials for their classes, the proprietors, through the heads, took full responsibility for the provision of instructional materials and furniture. All of these, the teachers felt, contributed to making the immediate environment learner-friendly and safe.

In contrast to the above, a teacher lamented the short supply of essentials in government schools and complained that there was “too much talk about improvisation,” thus putting undue stress on the teachers. She argued that certain instructional materials were better provided than improvised and that one could not improvise endlessly. She regretted that such basic materials as vanguarders were not available in government schools. Yet, in their school, videocassettes served as teaching-learning tools in some instances.

The study revealed that all the teachers planned their lessons daily or weekly, spending about two hours daily or five hours weekly on them. Lesson preparation, according to the respondents, was neither done as a requirement nor an imposition from the school administration but as an important element enhancing teaching. As one respondent put it, “If you do not plan, you cannot present a good lesson.”

As well as the teachers’ own attention to lesson preparation and maintenance of relevant and up-to-date records, the senior staff provided guidance on the structure and content of such records and regularly ascertained that they were well kept. More attention was paid to the less experienced and junior teachers, whose records were corrected and commented on by their supervisors.

Supervision

The supervisory role of the senior staff was obvious, as evidenced by their signatures and comments in red ink. They reportedly observed lessons and gave support, encouragement and suggestions on teaching methodologies and techniques. A teacher disclosed that the staff in her school nicknamed their head teacher “satellite,” on account of her ability to spot errors either on the blackboard or in their records.

This was highly appreciated by the entire staff, since she always corrected such errors.

Mixed messages were received on the degree of teacher participation in decision-making. While some claimed that it was high, one teacher thought participation did not go beyond the committees they headed, such as the examination committee. In his opinion, everyone's responsibilities were clearly defined, though the head teacher was not viewed as authoritarian or autocratic.

Whereas participation in decision-making was extended to the parents through PTA meetings and "Open Days" in one school, the PTA in the other school was described as "dead." Nonetheless, the parents' participation in the life of both schools was most obvious, and it reportedly ranged from administrative matters to observation of actual teaching and the children's work.

Only one teacher downplayed the role of the parents in matters pertaining to teacher accountability, management, resource mobilization and utilization, and in teaching and learning activities. According to him, about 80% of the parents did not bother about these matters. Generally, however, the parents were described as committed and concerned about the progress and welfare of their children. Even though they did not operate through any organized structure, such as a PTA, they paid high fees and ensured that their children were taught. They attended meetings when invited and held telephone conversations with the teachers.

One of the respondents said that the parents provided materials for them in the form of notes that were sometimes reproduced in bulk. They spent their resources to reproduce documents and donated textbooks they considered useful to the school.

Teaching methods

Multiple approaches and strategies were used during the teaching-learning process. The interviewees claimed to approach their work from the pupils' perspective; everything was learner-centered, with emphasis on "quality teaching and learning." Hence, the activities

they mentioned included “explanation,” “interaction with students” using “probing questions,” according students the “opportunity to practice” and allowing them to engage in “independent work.” The “enquiry method” and “play method” were also used. Periodic tests (conducted either monthly, termly or weekly), class work and oral responses from the pupils were indicators or criteria for measuring achievement. The teachers claimed to balance their focus between knowledge on the one hand, and skills and attitudes on the other. One of the teachers, for instance, cited drama as a means of inculcating a sense of responsibility in the students.

Records of work were up-to-date, and all teachers prepared them according to a format set by the administrative staff. This highlighted the subject, work done, material used, reference and remarks. In pupils’ copybooks, there was evidence of regular written work.

In each of the schools, school-based workshops were considered important for the professional and academic development of the staff. Workshops focused on perceived areas of weakness while serving sometimes as avenues for disseminating or sharing innovative ideas. Teachers learned from their pupils and colleagues. As one teacher explained: “If we [the teachers] have a problem that we cannot solve in maths, for example, we ask the children to try to solve it. We also ask them to find out from their parents when they go home, and we ask for help from the teachers in the secondary section. We collaborate with everybody, and we don’t pretend to know everything. In fact, this morning, we had a problem, which was solved by a student. I gave him D50.00 as a reward.”

The findings from these interviews with teachers have been confirmed from actual classroom observations, as described earlier.

Time on task

To the respondents, teaching and learning are the most important activities in the school. To maximize actual “time on task,” time was not wasted unnecessarily. Thus, both teachers and pupils went to school on time. The administrative staff monitored compliance and did not tolerate lateness. Teachers who arrived at school late had a

red line drawn beside their names and had to seek permission before leaving the school premises during work hours. Since the proprietor/proprietress could walk into the school at any time, everyone was careful. Teachers who did not measure up to expectations were dismissed. In one school, in addition to supervision by the head, the Anglican mission ensured that all the regulations were adhered to. They set the salaries.

The proprietress of one of the schools was reportedly fond of interacting with the pupils during her school rounds and getting information from them. She believes, according to one respondent, that “children don’t tell lies.”

Teachers’ perceptions

One risk of qualitative research methods, which often have a smaller sample than quantitative methods, is generalizing from too few cases. Mindful of this, this study sought to probe into the teachers’ perceptions of “effective teachers” and “effective schools.” The responses, which appeared genuine, are summarized below. According to the respondents, an “effective teacher” must:

- Devote sufficient time to preparation before actual teaching;
- Prepare documentation for all lessons and teach according to plan;
- Monitor what the pupils do and document it;
- Be a model to the children and behave well;
- Manage his or her class;
- Be resourceful, tolerant and interested in his or her work as well as the pupils;
- Love the teaching profession, and sacrifice when need be.

From their perspective, therefore, effective schools “must have the capacity to produce good students”¹ and “allow teachers to administer punishment” in order to maintain discipline. Other characteristics include enough materials, high quality teaching and a “good and functional administrative set-up,” supported by dedicated teachers.

1. It is regrettable that the interviewee was not probed further to state what a good student should or ought to be.

One of the respondents could not see the difference between an effective school and an effective teacher, in that for him effectiveness is determined “by the end of year exam” and the degree of discipline maintained.

Among other ideas, the need for the re-introduction of remedial classes for slow learners was mentioned. Further, two respondents thought that teaching should be accorded the respect it deserves. These two were inspired to become teachers by their parents and they regarded teaching as “an honorable profession.”

Discussion

Teachers feature in school effectiveness research as an important variable. Their role “has long been recognized as central to the delivery as well as the quality of education” (Lockheed and Verspoor, 1991, p. 30). Therefore, their views on schooling must be taken into account. The participants in this study are not university graduates and do not keep abreast with educational research. Their opinions were thus grounded in their experience and knowledge garnered over time. The study has undoubtedly corroborated findings of previous studies, but it also questions a few assumptions. These are discussed below.

Of the factors that contribute to student performance in the private schools that participated in the study, the following stand out clearly:

- The schools are autonomous; that is, government does not control them directly. Hence, they are modeled or fashioned as desired by those who run them. This gives them a leeway to determine and develop a sense of direction for their staff. Their codes of conduct, rules, regulations, policies and sanction procedures are designed to suit their contexts, circumstances and objectives. Accordingly, the degree of autonomy enables the heads to take initiative without fear of being reprimanded for whatever innovations and adventures they wish to undertake. Thus, they can set the tone of their schools and devise rules and regulations that may not necessarily derive from some superstructure. Dis-

ciplinary action and other decisions can be set upon teachers without delay. Consequently, the authority invested in the school head tends to compel all staff to conform to the ethos set within. Invariably, though, the disadvantage is that teachers could be unjustly treated without recourse to any type of external arbitration or redress.

- The incentives and privileges accorded to the teachers, especially conditions comparatively better and appreciable; hence the teachers are proud to be associated with the school. Because their schools seem to be doing far better than many other schools, mission or government, the teachers of private schools tend to develop a sense of confidence and accomplishment. In fact, in the issue of April 7, 2003, the *Daily Observer* quotes the foreign teachers in one of the two schools as having “argued that their school ranks among the best private schools in the country because of their dedication and hard work” (p. 2).
- Paradoxically, the study reveals that schools that tend to do better in the Gambia are not strictly monitored from outside but rather from within. They are less frequented by government officials, either from the regional education offices or headquarters. The implication is that it may be much better to focus on establishing the schools’ internal efficiency and monitoring and supervisory measures than to impose them from afar.

Taking the above into consideration, *Table 21* attempts to compare the private schools and government schools based on the findings of this study and findings reported at Coordination Committee meetings after school visits were conducted.

Assumptions and realities

The researchers expected these schools to have an active Parent-Teacher Association for coordinated discussions and approaches to school development and management, but they did not find this to be the case. Such an active organization could provide a useful forum to discuss important matters and arrive at decisions together, thus harnessing the potential that members may possess individually.

Table 21. Comparison of private and government schools

Private schools	Government schools
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Autonomous and regulated privately 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> State controlled and regulated publicly
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sanctions procedure: action is implemented very quickly 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bureaucratic procedures: only PSC can dismiss teachers in public schools. Transfer is usually the means of disciplining defiant staff.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Motivation/incentives: teachers can conduct classes after normal working hours. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Teachers are not allowed to conduct private classes on school premises; Working conditions, accommodation problems, social environment, postings and other forms of frustrations may demotivate teachers.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Conducive learning and working environment in the Greater Banjul Area. Teachers choose where they want to teach. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Teachers may not have a choice and could be posted up-country; for instance, in remote areas.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Administrative support on educational/professional matters is given; head can choose staff. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Some heads do not have the experience or the qualifications to provide professional and academic support or guidance. Heads have little say, if any, over whom they work with.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> On-going professional development 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Some schools do not have a staff development program.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Accountability: parents and proprietor/proprietress hold teachers accountable for the students' performance. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The community/parents, especially in remote communities, cannot monitor teaching-learning processes and outputs.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Home-school link is strong: family support for pupils is significant. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Illiterate and poor parents cannot help children at home or complement school efforts.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Childrens' have a voice and are central. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Children are hardly consulted, except when investigations are mounted for specific reasons.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Proprietor's interference is crucial and decisive. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The community does not wield authority to intervene on the spot.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Discipline and high expectations for staff and pupils. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Poor performance over time tends to lead to resignation or indifference; therefore, expectations could be low.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sense of community: Teacher-parent, and teacher-pupil relationships lead to building a "learning community" for all within the school, regardless of status. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Integration is prioritized; the 'basic cycle concept' is not comprehended and transformed into action in some schools; and schools in remote areas cannot build partnerships and a sense of community with other schools, except when initiated from outside as in clusters established for workshops.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Technology may be used in the learning process. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Electricity and resource constraints make it impossible/difficult to use modern technological learning equipment.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Records are up-to-date and used in the teaching-learning situation. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Apathy and disregard for records abound. Schemes of work and registers are sometimes not well kept.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Multiple and flexible teaching approaches are employed. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The 'chalk-and-talk' method – teachers as repositories of knowledge – predominates.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Teacher attitude, confidence and sense of pride are positive. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Teacher attitude sometimes leaves much to be desired; confidence and sense of pride are undermined.

Little importance was attached to extra-curricular activities; this was unexpected. Although the teachers claimed to focus on attitudes, discipline and character formation, it appeared as if there was more

emphasis on the academic preparation of pupils for further scholastic work.

The schools had no definite or structured plan for professional development. Whereas flexibility could be an advantage, the absence of a plan makes it doubtful as to whether their approach was consistent, systematized and progressive. These institutions did not seem to be change-oriented, and there appeared to be satisfaction in having children pass examinations. Therefore, there was adherence to past and traditional approaches that led to the successes realized over the years. One teacher wondered whether standards would not fall when the Primary School Leaving Certificate Examination – the national selection for entry to secondary school – was phased out. This examination was the driving force or guiding factor for teaching in these schools. Whether intended or not, the examination results were the benchmark for public assessment of all Lower Basic Schools in the country.

It seems from this study that teachers tend to derive more job satisfaction in the private schools, due to the environment, the resources, school conditions, the type of students admitted therein and their public image. Close supervision, accountability and high expectations equally appear as factors or elements that bolster student and teacher performance. In effect, there is no room for complacency.

Importantly, the study does not corroborate the notion that in African schools, family background does not constitute a significant factor in student performance or school effectiveness. The family backgrounds, inputs and support from the pupils' homes seem to contribute significantly. One of the respondents revealed this when she said that those who came from families where English was spoken performed better in essay and letter writing than the rest. Interestingly, though, she added that such children came from Mandinka families.

Conclusion

139. It is debatable as to whether these private schools can be rated as more effective than the government schools that serve underprivileged families yet manage to make an impact on the lives of their students. In other words, if value added by these schools is taken into consideration against the significance of what the pupils learn from outside the schools, then it would be revealing to discover which of the two sectors – private or public – is relatively more effective. As Farrel explains,

... it is the “value added” to learning by school-related factors that school effectiveness properly refers, to that proportion of learning gains that can reasonably be attributed to the schooling process itself (1989, pp. 29-30).

Davies and Harber (1997) also point out that:

A good school may be found to have high expectations of its students; but those high expectations may be the result of having a ‘good’ intake over a number of years that are likely to produce commendable results – as in a selective or elite school (p. 29).

Since they are better organized, and test scores determine performance, in spite of all the possible contributory factors from without, evidence suggests that private schools seem more effective as regards academic performance. This statement is cautiously made, noting that:

The first decision to be made in effectiveness research is the outcome on which schools will be measured and compared. The selection is not a neutral activity. A tendency to choose the “measurable” leads to a focus on examination and test results; the implication of this is that the school’s main task is to get as many children through examinations as possible (Davies and Harber, 1997 p. 27).

Arguably, it would require another study to delve into the long-term effects of the schools in other areas, including the likelihood that pupils become active, successful, and good citizens.

Recommendations

Finally, the following recommendations are forwarded, particularly for policymakers and managers:

- Teachers constitute a significant variable in the learning process and effectiveness of schools. Quality teaching therefore depends on the quality of teachers in terms of training, commitment, attitude, sincerity, and academic standing. The recruitment process, teacher education, promotion and professional development should not be taken for granted in public schools but addressed by policymakers.
- Inputs for external monitoring and supervision may not be as effective as internal efficiency and quality assurance measures instituted within each school. Incentives, job satisfaction and improved working conditions can increase teacher motivation and correspondingly increase output and improve performance.
- School policies should be made flexible to allow heads to experiment and implement their educational beliefs and ideas. School leaders must be educators by orientation that can provide guidance, strong leadership and maintain a clear sense of direction amid unity of purpose for all staff.
- Communities and parents need to be brought closer to the schools to provide support, supplement school efforts and help to hold teachers accountable.
- Basic requirements that make schools safe, attractive, functional and fascinating should be provided, and pupils should be encouraged to learn with or without teacher support.
- School heads should be assisted to identify the factors and characteristics associated with effective schools and to ultimately assess themselves systemically over time for improvement purposes. In this regard, assessment should provide information on how effective the schools are and ratings made along such lines.

School head teachers

The purpose of the school head teacher interview was to assess the management styles in the two private schools with a view to finding out those school-effectiveness factors present in these private schools to warrant such high achievement. As was highlighted in the literature review, the head teacher of a school sets the tone of the school and may be solely accountable for what is seen as the success or failure of the school (Pamela et al., 1992).

Two head teachers participated in the study. One of them is a graduate teacher with 18 years experience, and the other is a qualified teacher with 32 years teaching experience. Both are Gambians with experience teaching in government schools, and one has taught in a mission school. One of the head teachers is in charge of the lower basic, upper basic and the senior secondary and is assisted by two deputies in the school. The other is in charge of only the lower basic.

The interview questions focused on the following school factors, which will be used to discuss the findings:

- School choice;
- Resources and incentives;
- Teaching and learning;
- Time on task;
- Teaching methods;
- Management support and supervision;
- PTA/community links.

Findings and analysis

School choice

The choice of school of the teacher respondents was largely determined by the satisfaction they gained by teaching in private schools. Managerial problems are fewer in terms of resources, teachers and pupils. However their perceptions varied. One said that teaching in a government school could be constrained by lack of resources and large class size but this could be alleviated if a head teacher is resourceful. The other however feels that children are the same in all

schools, and the difference lies in the managerial skills of the head teacher. It also came out clearly that the participation of parents in school activities aids effective teaching and learning and school improvement in general. As one head teacher explained:

“In the government school I was heading, the pupils in my school came out both first and second positions in a test organized by this very school and my school then. This performance was repeated in the national common entrance that year, in which pupils in my school also came in first and second.”

Resources and incentives

The head teachers' salaries are a little better in private schools, but, according to them, the difference is not significant. One of the head teachers noted the incentives they receive, such as loan schemes with no added interest. They do not participate in the extra instruction given by teachers in the afternoon, for which pupils pay fees.

Both head teachers stated that private schools have more resources than the government and mission schools in which they have taught. The proprietors order the books and sell them to the pupils. Here parents are willing to purchase all the necessary materials and even supplementary ones. It is evident from the discussions that the heads expressed real satisfaction at the resources provided. One of them explained:

The good thing about this school is we have the books, papers, felt pens, toilet roll and every thing we need. Books are available for sale at the schools book shop and these are imported by the proprietor and parents are all co operative in buying them.

The availability of a library or shelves in the head teachers' office, where reading books and the reference materials were kept for pupils and teachers use, was seen by both heads as an aid to teaching and learning. One of the schools has a library situated in the senior school, which teachers can use, while in both schools the head teacher's office is equipped with books kept in shelves as a substitute for a library.

Learning and teaching

An outstanding feature in both schools is that lesson preparation is given prominent attention. Teachers are monitored by the heads and assisted by senior teachers to ensure that this is happening. In one of the schools the head is assisted by two deputy heads whose roles are just to monitor the work of teachers and to do administrative and managerial tasks. This is in addition to the monitoring of the senior teachers, which is a feature in both schools. One of the heads explained:

This term, I checked on their lesson notes twice. I also called for pupils' workbooks and checked on work frequency, corrections, neatness and accuracy. I also went into classes to observe and to help.

This demonstrates that there is constant monitoring and supervision in these schools. This feature is lacking in most government schools. Inspection report SQAD (2000) indicates that in most government schools inspected, senior teachers, deputy heads and the head teachers do not monitor work of teachers in their schools.

Time on task

School hours are the same in these schools as in government schools. The only difference is they do not operate double shift. Another outstanding feature is that pupils in each of the two private schools are engaged in study classes for at least two hours every day, which is supervised by the class teachers, who receive incentives from the schools and the parents. This is lacking in most government schools, although it is present in some mission schools.

Teaching methods

The head teacher of both schools confirmed that teachers used different teaching strategies as the need arises. In one of the schools the pupils are screened according to ability, and differentiation is the key to the success in the school. Pupils are given individual attention, and the progress of the bright ones is not delayed. This is supported by Wringe (1989), who emphasized that the moment of readiness should be exploited to the full and that if this is the point at which

pupils become capable of coping with a wider range of materials, and are enthusiastic to do so, the opportunity should not be missed. This is not happening in government schools. The large class sizes are a barrier for teachers to apply differentiation. Maybe there is the need to look at the large class size of some of these schools. As one head teacher puts it,

Here pupils are screened according to ability. This allows the teacher to push ahead and not delay the good ones. When I was at a government school, I practiced the same.

In the same vein the other head teacher feels that pupils who are slow learners should be kept behind to catch up before being promoted, and this is the practice in her school.

Pupils are assessed through tests and exams. In one of the schools, the head teacher called for the books of the pupils to check on the work done. This is in addition to the checking done by the senior teachers. In the other school, the head teacher had two deputies who checked on the work together with the senior teachers. Records of pupil's progress are kept, and teacher's attention is called to address weak cases.

Management support and supervision

A feature that came out clearly in the study is that there is constant monitoring going on in the private schools. Heads are very vigilant, and teachers are aware of this and do not take any chance to compromise quality. This is absent in government schools, as stated by one of the heads.

I had to sack three of my teachers because they were not delivering. One of them was always absent and giving excuses, while the other two were not doing any meaningful work in class with the children.

This shows that heads in private schools know what is happening in every class and can assess their teachers in terms of quality delivery. Is this happening in the mission and government schools? Another

interesting thing is that private schools have the mandate to sack teachers not performing. Do government and mission schools have to look at the mandate of the head teachers?

Both the heads who were interviewed hold key positions in the management of their schools. They are the principal advisors of the boards of the schools.

At school level, there are shared responsibilities; each teacher has a stake in the administration of the school and roles are spelled out.

Yes, we all play different roles. I have my responsibilities and other teachers have their."

Yes, in a big way. I advise the board and the school committee. My deputy and other teachers help me in managing the school.

Wilby (1988) emphasized that lack of delegation in schools, especially by senior managers, affects the administration role in a school. Here one can argue that in these private schools the responsibilities given to teachers are an effectiveness factor.

In the same vein, Paisey (1992) states that "no head can exercise leadership without delegating most of his [or her] responsibilities."

PTA and community links

165. It came out clearly from both schools that although teachers might be held responsible for what goes on in the classrooms, parents do not have the mandate to hold any teacher responsible for the poor performance of their children. They have an equal stake in their children's performances according to the views of both heads. The following statement by one of the heads explains it further.

They are conscious that we are the professionals. They are invited to the school every term and at Open Day. They are free to visit classes any time and talk to teachers. We have an open door policy and parents are free to visit the school any time and give us suggestions.

Head teachers' perceptions

Since the head teachers' views are play a key role in the findings of the study, it is important that their perceptions of an "effective head teacher" and an "effective school" be recorded. According to them, an effective head teacher is one that:

- Supervises;
- Monitors;
- Gives advice;
- Gives teachers enough freedom to exercise their initiatives in their role;
- Aims at achieving good quality academic performance.

The following were identified as factors for an effective school:

- Availability of resources;
- Conducive environment;
- Good teaching and learning;
- Good community links;
- Disciplined students;
- Dedicated and hardworking teachers.

All these factors are school-effectiveness factors, and if the views of both heads are geared towards these factors, one might deduce that these heads are running their schools effectively.

One of the heads feels that the Department of State for Education should be helping private schools in terms of accommodation. Also one lamented that private schools should be free to offer other examinations in addition to what is in the national curriculum, as pupils should not be limited to learning only about the Gambia, as they will be faced with challenges of the outside world.

Discussion

An outstanding feature in both the private schools visited is that most of the resources are generated from within, through school fees and other charges. A small percentage also comes from other sources, such as NGO and mission support. In both schools the administration provides all the necessary resources and, according to them, the schools are well resourced.

Private schools are well-resourced and the administrations go all out to provide teachers with resources needed for teaching and learning, which was evident in the resources available in classes observed. This is a missing factor in most government and some mission schools, where resources are limited often underutilized, as was reported in the 2002 MLA study.

In both private schools, teachers found not performing as expected were given one month's notice and sacked. There is no compromise for quality delivery in the two schools. Teachers are held responsible and taken to task for poor performance of pupils. Head teachers in government schools do not have the mandate to sack any teacher. They can report teachers not performing, but their powers are limited to only reporting.

Staff development is a prominent feature in both schools, although there was no evidence of a written staff development plan. However, there was evidence that both schools organized staff development workshops at least once a term. The main objective, according to the head teacher, is to train teachers and to upgrade their standards. In addition to these training, the schools also participate in all in-service training programs. This is an indication that teachers in the private schools are receiving constant training on methodology. This means that teachers of the private schools are exposed to more In Service training than those in the government schools.

Unlike government and mission schools, the private schools in the study do not operate double shifts, and, as a result, they gain 30 minutes over double-shift schools. This amounts to many hours a week and a year. Pupil-teacher contact time is greater in the private schools, and one can argue that it has a positive effect on quality. Taking into consideration that some government schools, especially the Class C Schools (schools with more than 3000 pupils) operate double shift, it is obvious that the contact hours in these schools are fewer, which has a definite impact on teaching and learning. In some mission schools with double shifts, the time lost is made up by asking the pupils to come to school on Saturdays. Considering that in

government and mission schools the teachers running these classes teach from 8:00 a.m. to 6.30 p.m., one can question the effectiveness of their output. There is no doubt that this is definitely a long day for any teacher, especially in government schools, where class sizes are so large.

Both head teachers lamented the *laissez faire* attitude and lack of commitment by some teachers, especially in the government schools. Both feel head teachers in government schools should be given the mandate to employ and dismiss teachers. In this way they felt they would be in full control of what is happening in their schools, which will have an impact on quality.

Assumptions and realities

One would assume that a good salary would attract teachers to a private school. The study proved that teachers are more concerned with job satisfaction than with salary. Therefore this study concludes that an environment conducive to learning is a factor for high teacher performance.

The mission of both schools is to educate pupils to be able to fit in society, with the aim of developing the child academically, socially, morally, and physically. However, what is certain from this study is that academic development is given more weight in private schools. Pupils are promoted only on merit, and outstanding pupils are also not held back.

Good discipline is high on the agenda of the schools. Both schools have set rules and regulations, which pupils abide by. These are included in the package given to pupils on enrolment. The perception of both heads is that without discipline no meaningful teaching and learning takes place. The school administration designed the school rules, and the parents endorsed them through the school committees. There is therefore no resistance from the parents.

One of the schools has an ambitious development plan, although it is not written; but the other school's development plan is limited to only staff development. An interesting aspect of one of the school's

plan is that it involves parents. This means that the school is working closely with the parents, although both heads lamented that there is no active PTA in their schools. The notion of the role of a PTA in most Gambian schools is to help in fund-raising or other social activities.

Quality is high on the schools' agenda. The study revealed that teachers prepare before actually facing the classes to teach. They prepare daily lesson notes in one school and in the other daily record. These are checked by the administration. There is also continuous assessment of the pupils' work by the teachers at class level and externally by the senior teachers and the head teachers. Exam results are high on the schools' agenda.

Conclusion

This study has established that most of the school-effectiveness factors mentioned in the literature are present in the private schools in the Gambia. One can argue that some of these factors contribute to the high performance in these schools, but it is obvious that the underlying principle is the good management skills of the head teachers.

Recommendations

Taking into consideration that the head teacher's managerial skills make a difference in the performance of the school, it is recommended that head teachers be trained on management before assuming duties, and those in managerial positions without any training be subjected to the necessary training.

The study has indicated that the availability of resources aids school performance and, possibly, improvement. It is recommended that government schools be provided with enough teaching and learning materials, especially textbooks and supplementary books.

It is important that teachers in government schools sign a working contract with the head teacher and the head teacher be given the mandate to have the powers to recommend the dismissal of any

teacher not performing as required. This will make teachers in government schools more committed to their work.

The issue of monitoring and supervision is not taken seriously in government schools. This has been stated in many inspection reports, and inspectors have even issued forms to schools to senior teachers for monitoring purpose.

Pupils

Introduction

Fourteen pupils, (seven males and seven females) participated in this study. The questions they answered were intended to obtain information on their background, availability of resources in their school, learning and teaching; and general reflections. All the interviews were structured and conducted individually in one selected private school in the Greater Banjul Area.

Of the fourteen respondents, four were from Grade 1, four from Grade 2, two from Grade 4, two from Grade 5 and two from Grade 6. Their parents are mainly businessmen, managing directors, secretaries, civil servants, company employees; only one parent works overseas. It could be inferred that the pupils come from family backgrounds with a high socio-economic status.

Attitudes towards schooling

If pupils have more things they like about their school, they are more likely to be attending school regularly. This section assessed their attitude towards their school and how it can influence their learning achievement.

Pupils' likes and dislikes

All pupils stated that they like their school because both teachers and pupils are hard working, their teachers teach them well, and the pupils perform well in selective examinations (PSLCE).

Most pupils however, stated that they dislike deteriorating classrooms, student indiscipline of all forms and corporal punishment by some teachers.

These findings are consistent with those of the MLA study (Gambia/DOSE 2000). Pupils in private schools like good and hard-working teachers and pupils. However, they dislike pupil's indiscipline. The MLA study indicated that children do not like fighting, bullying, or corporal punishment.

Pupils' preoccupation in the absence of a teacher

All the pupils stated that they work on their own, have lessons with "floating" supply teachers or are supervised by a neighboring class teacher. This suggests that there is close supervision of pupils in private schools, and classes are monitored and pupils' learning is not disrupted.

Resources/school conditions

Overall the pupils expressed satisfaction with the resources provided by the school. All the pupils stated that exercise books, textbooks, pencils, and so on are provided by the school and that they pay D300.00 – D400.00 for textbooks. All the pupils indicated that the learning materials provided have been useful. These findings are in contrast with the findings of the MLA study on mission and government schools, where 50% of the pupils do not have additional textbooks for the core subjects.

Learning materials

All the pupils stated that exercise books, textbooks, mathematical sets, pencils, and so on are provided by parents. They spend their resources to buy the learning materials considered useful.

Availability of school library

All the pupils stated that their school has no library but that a collection of supplementary readers is kept in the head teacher's office. Pupils indicated that it would be nice to have a library.

Teaching and learning

Provision of extra tuition

All the pupils stated that teachers provide extra tuition after school (both in-school and private instruction). They all indicated that their parents always pay for the cost of instruction (remedial teaching, homework and new areas of work).

Pupils' perception of their teachers

The pupils' general perception is that their teachers are good, helpful and patient with them at school.

Pupils' perception of their head teacher

All the pupils indicated that their head teacher is very good, kind and encourages them at school. One pupil indicated that the head teacher is excellent. It came out clearly that the pupils' learning environment in private schools is more hospitable than in government and mission schools.

Governance and management

All the pupils view a good school as a place where proper learning takes place, where teachers teach well and where pupils are helped and encouraged to learn. This is in contrast to government and mission schools, where 43.6% of the pupils like school because they have friends in the school, while only 35% of them do so because they perceive the school to be good (Gambia/DOSE 2000b).

All the pupils in the private-school survey stated that their parents are interested in the affairs of the school and that the majority of parents attend PTA meetings. Most pupils indicated their dislike of fighting after school. One pupil indicated the need to eat well in order for him to be able to learn well.

Discussion

Pupils feature in school-effectiveness and school-improvement research as an important variable. Their characteristic and predisposition towards learning tasks can be assumed to influence their

learning achievement (Gambia/DOSE 2000b). Therefore their views on schooling must not be taken for granted. The respondents in this study are lower basic school pupils of a private institution. Findings from previous studies have been corroborated and discussed.

The pupils come from families of relatively high socio-economic status and live in the urban area (Greater Banjul area). Pupils of such socio-economic status tend to perform better than their colleagues in government and mission schools. Thus the private schools' performance, as seen in the MLA study, corroborates the findings of the NAT (Gambia/DOSE 2002).

Pupils like their school because both teachers and pupils are hard-working; teachers teach well and pupils perform well in examinations. This is not surprising, given the pupils' positive attitude toward school and their unflinching dislike for all forms of student indiscipline and corporal punishment. The level of teacher supervision and the pupils' preoccupation in the absence of a teacher are a source of motivation and consequently have an implication for performance. Expectations are undoubtedly high for pupils, probably much higher than in government and mission schools.

The adequate provision of instructional materials (exercise books, textbooks, pencils, and so on) make learning conditions comparatively better than those in government and mission schools. A feature that comes out is that private schools are more resourced than other types of schools in the Gambia.

The provision of extra school and private tuition to pupils paid by parents is a source of motivation, and pupils tend to develop a sense of confidence and high self-esteem. Their perception of their teachers and head teacher suggests their learning environment is better than in government and mission schools.

All the pupils are of the view that a good school is a place where effective learning takes place and where pupils are helped and encouraged to learn. They also think that a good school should have a "nice" and beautiful environment.

All the pupils stated that their parents are interested in the affairs of the school and that the majority of parents attend PTA meetings. The school has an active Parent Teacher Association for coordinated discussions and approaches to school development and management.

Conclusion

It seems from this study that pupils' performance in the private schools are influenced by factors such as the school environment, the resources, school conditions, type of pupils, close supervision, accountability, high expectations and public image. The family backgrounds, inputs and support from the pupils' homes seem to contribute significantly as well.

Recommendations

Based on the foregoing analysis and discussion, the following recommendations are made for possible improvement on pupils' performance in the Gambia.

- An adequate number of qualified teachers should be provided for each school irrespective of its location. These teachers should be motivated to give their best.
- New policies to attract and retain qualified teachers should be initiated.
- Education authorities (DOSE) should ensure that the school effectiveness factors identified in private schools should be adopted by the other types of schools.

Parents

Introduction

Twelve parents from the two private schools surveyed were interviewed in two separate groups of six each. The aim of the structured interview was to elicit parents' views on school-effectiveness issues and their participation in school. The respondents' ages and background in both school groups varied, as indicated in Table 22 below:

Table 22 Ages and occupations

SCHOOL A		SCHOOL B	
Age	Occupation	Age	Occupation
55	Businessman	43	Program manager
40	Clerk	48	Secretary
34	Clerk	39	Carpenter
55	Engineer	38	Businesswoman
37	Housewife	46	Secretary
38	Manager	32	Retired Teacher

Findings and discussion

Choice of school

The study reveals that the parents' choice of a private school is influenced by a host of factors, including:

- Good passes in national exam results;
- Proximity to home;
- Lack of a double-shift system;
- Teacher status, experience and commitment;
- Positive teacher attitudes toward teaching and learning;
- School's concern for appropriate pupil behavior.

About 50% of the parents interviewed believe that there are better teachers in private schools and, as a result, children perform better in private schools than in public schools. About 68% of parents' choices are influenced by the absence of a double-shift system and, unlike the government schools, the assurance that teachers are not overloaded with too many lessons and a long day.

When probed further about the double-shift system, respondents expressed resentment:

Teachers are human beings; when they are tired their performance is affected, and as a result teaching and learning are negatively affected.

Another parent said,

We do not want our children to be victims of the double shift.

Resources

Effective parental contribution to children's school work is a factor for improved student performance. This did not surface in the parents' interview, but it came out clearly in both the teachers' and the head teachers' interviews. Of the twelve parents, none made mention of their role in enhancing the quality of education of their children, though they believe that quality in school is enhanced when the following are present in a school setting:

- "Good caliber" of teachers;
- Availability of teaching and learning materials;
- Availability of supplementary materials;
- Teachers interested in and committed to effective teaching and learning.

School leadership/management and PTA

Regarding school leadership and management, the views of parents in both schools are that head teachers are open, committed and understanding. They exercise a lot of patience and monitor the work of teachers and pupils.

Conflicting views surfaced from the PTA of both schools. This was demonstrated by comments such as:

I never come for meetings.

I am never invited.

The PTA is supportive and ensures decisions taken at meetings are implemented.

The PTA needs to be reactivated.

As stated in the literature review, parental involvement is one of the facilitating conditions for school effectiveness. Analysis of the responses indicates parents' conflicting views regarding the status of the PTA and its activities in the two private schools. These triggered questions such as, "Is the PTA functional as a body?" or "Is the school working with only few parents?"

However, follow-up interviews were not conducted. This notwithstanding, some parents expressed the following views:

We do meet sometimes; what is evident is that some parents are not aware of PTA meetings and as a result rate it as not functional.

Contribution to the school

Parents' contributions to schools are significant. They both are "within the school" and "outside the school," and both contributions come in the form of moral and financial support. The "within the school" contribution is through paying school and study fees, buying instructional materials, supplementary reading books and pencils, providing school lunches and participating in "bring and buy sales." All of these are basic inputs for school effectiveness.

Respondents considered in this study are of the view that parents' financial contribution improves the school's financial situation and, consequently, contributes to school effectiveness.

Supervision

The work that parents do with the school to supervise the child in the learning process is vital. Parental help outside the school is usually directed to helping the child learn. This study reveals that assistance on homework assignments—explaining concepts and making comments on assigned work—is given to children by parents on request. Other assistance is rendered through providing a hired study teacher, as some parents do not have time and believe that hiring a study teacher impacts on performance and helps in producing excellent results.

This study further reveals that other inhibiting factors, such as household chores, high responsibilities at work and inability to assist (i.e., not being conversant with schoolwork) prevent parents from assisting their children at home.

This indicates that some of the parents in this sample give priority to doing household chores and fulfilling their job responsibilities over assisting children with assign school work at home.

Respondents attach a lot of importance to teacher and parent meetings. They are of the opinion that in managing child welfare and monitoring child performance and behavior, giving feedback by both the school and the parent can be very valuable.

However, parents agree that, due to their busy schedules, they hardly visit schools and, in most cases, the link between individual parents and the school is missing.

Children's time after school

Children are engaged in numerous activities after school. Parents believe that these activities broaden thinking, develop skills, improve physical health and instill fear of God and self-discipline in children. After-school engagements mentioned are studies, household chores, Dara (Koranic school), playing with siblings or friends, and watching television.

Assumptions and realities

According to the parents, children view these private schools as good schools in the sense that there is effective teaching and learning. Children assume that discussions and competition for the best class among teachers and pupils and also class performance and good results in national exams are the realities on which they base their assumptions.

Parents' view of a good school is based on the assumption of their concept of a good school. A good school, according to them, is one with:

- Established and implemented rules and regulations approved by both the school and the parents;
- Well-motivated, committed and dedicated teachers;
- Discipline and high performing students;
- Strong communication links with parents and their views and suggestions valued by the school administration.

Parents, however, have reservations regarding two issues in these two private schools: school fees and provision of scholarships. Parents lamented the increase of school fees every year and suggested that government should introduce a control mechanism in private schools.

With regard to scholarship, parents insisted that children in private schools need scholarships just as much those in public schools. Parents with more than one child in the school struggle to pay school fees. The reality is that parents made a choice regarding a public school and a private school, but in as much as the good school issue was considered, the financial implications of this choice and the number of children they could support must be factored into their decisions.

Conclusion and recommendations

The analysis of the responses shows that the private schools in this study are grappling with issues of school effectiveness just as the public schools are. It is evident that these parents do not make regular school visits, the PTAs are not very functional, and the link between individual teachers and parents needs to be improved.

On the other hand, the study also shows that parents in these private schools provide adequate instructional materials, school lunches and participate fully in fund-raising activities. The question one may ask is whether these factors are responsible for the significant differences in performance or the home background and experiences of the children are contributing factors to the effectiveness of these schools. One can conclude that it is a combination of both and, as a result, the following recommendations are suggested:

- The issue of school-parent links should be adequately addressed. Sensitization programs should be embarked on to bridge the gap.
- Helping the child learn at home is not highly prioritized by parents. Schools should embark on working with the PTA to strengthen this link.

5. Conclusion

It must be underscored that the findings of this study are not conclusive by themselves but are intended to shed more light on the findings of the MLA study. Findings on the quantitative study are based on data collected in 1999 during the MLA survey, while the qualitative data were collected during this study. Since both studies took place within the same education policy period, and there has not been any significant policy or operational shift, it is reasonable to use both data sets concurrently to find explanations for school conditions.

The fundamental question this study seeks to answer is why private schools consistently performed better than government and mission schools during the MLA (Gambia/DOSE 2000b) survey and similar national assessments. The findings suggest that the following factors help explain the disparity in performance:

- School management style;
- Availability of basic teaching and learning resources;
- Quality of monitoring and supervision;
- Professional support provided for teachers.

School management

From the findings of the study, it is clear that there is more shared responsibility in the private schools than other school types. This reflects the commitment of key partners in education service delivery. Conversely, heads of government and mission schools place less premium on providing responsibility to all stakeholders, the effect of which could deter the enhancement of service delivery. It is therefore evident that leadership support in schools is key to the realization of quality education.

Basic teaching and learning materials

The findings suggest that there is a high level of inadequacy of basic teaching and learning materials, such as chalk, syllabi, pupils' books and teachers' guides in government and mission schools, compared to private schools. This, to some extent explains the better performance of private schools.

Monitoring and supervision

During the follow-up study it was observed that private schools have more effective monitoring and supervision systems. Frequency of monitoring and supervision was also higher. Time on task for both students and teachers also seems to be higher for the private schools.

Professional support

Another factor that explains why private schools perform better is the degree of professional support provided to teachers. Their teachers receive more support from senior and head teachers.

In conclusion the result of the re-analysis of the MLA data and findings of the case studies tend to support the argument that the disparity in performance of the different school types can be primarily attributed to the factors described above. Differences in factors such as teacher qualifications, salaries and class sizes have not been decisive. It is therefore important that these conditions be considered from policy and practice dimensions with the view to eliminating the disparities

Recommendations

- Taking into consideration that the head teacher's managerial skills makes a difference in the performance of the school, it is recommended that head teachers be trained in management before assuming duties, and those in managerial positions wi-

thout any receive on-going professional development focusing on management and leadership.

- The study has indicated that the availability of resources aids school improvement. It is therefore recommended that government schools be provided with enough teaching and learning materials, especially textbooks and supplementary books.
- It is important that teachers in government schools sign a working contract with the head teachers, and the head teachers be given the mandate to recommend the dismissal of any teacher not performing as required. This would make teachers in government schools more committed to their work.
- The issue of monitoring and supervision is not taken seriously in government schools. This has been stated in many inspection reports, and inspectors have even issued forms to senior teachers to guide them in their monitoring and supervisory work.
- The issue of school parent link should be adequately addressed. Sensitization programs should be embarked on to bridge the gap.
- Teachers constitute a significant variable in the learning process and effectiveness of schools. Quality teaching therefore depends on the training, commitment, attitude, sincerity and academic standing of teachers. The recruitment process, teacher education, promotion and professional development should not be taken for granted in public schools but addressed by policymakers.
- Inputs for external monitoring and supervision may not be as effective as internal efficiency and quality assurance measures instituted within each school. Incentives, job satisfaction and improved working conditions can increase teacher motivation and correspondingly increase output and improve performance.
- School policies should be made flexible to allow heads to experiment and implement their educational beliefs and ideas. School leaders must be educators by orientation, who can provide guidance, strong leadership and maintain a clear sense of direction amid unity of purpose for all staff.
- Communities and parents need to be brought closer to the schools to provide support, supplement school efforts and help to

hold teachers accountable. Helping the child learn at home is not rated high in the priority of parents. Schools should embark on working with the PTA to establish and strengthen this link.

- Basic requirements that make schools safe, attractive, functional and fascinating should be provided, and pupils should be encouraged to learn with or without teacher support.
- School heads should be assisted to identify the factors and characteristics associated with effective schools and to ultimately assess themselves systemically over time for improvement purposes. In this regard, assessment should provide information on how effective the schools are and ratings made along such lines.
- Education authorities (DOSE) should ensure that the school-effectiveness factors identified in private schools are adopted by both the government and mission schools.
- The preparation of lessons before teaching should be emphasized and seen to be very important. The goals and objective(s) of the course work and single lessons should set the tone for the teaching and learning process.
- The availability of teaching and learning resources, which is an important factor in the delivery of the curriculum, should be given a higher priority. The DOSE should ensure this by increasing the budgetary allocation for public schools.
- Child-centered and democratic approaches to learning should be encouraged. The pupils perform, understand and apply what they have learned better when they take charge of their own learning. Teaching includes discussions, group work, and project work.
- The 880 hours of pupil contact time, which is recommended but is yet to be achieved, should be closely looked into. The afternoon classes in government schools should be thoroughly supervised by the school administration to ensure value for money.
- Self-discipline and orderliness should be emphasized. The culture and ethos of our education institutions should be characterized and shaped by a policy addressing school discipline and codes of conduct.

- The upward mobility of teachers in terms of promotion should take cognizance of their performance and qualifications.
- They should also be able to put in place a school discipline policy and measures to create an orderly learning environment, which the learners themselves cherish. There should also be recognition of work well done and sanctions for defiance.

In conclusion while the same conditions are impossible (or even desirable) to replicate across different types of schools, and the exact the mix of inputs and processes are difficult to determine, this study reaffirms that most of the generally acknowledged school-effectiveness factors as well the school improvement processes mentioned in the literature appear to contribute to the better performance in the Gambian private schools relative to public schools. A big challenge for the Gambian authorities is how to provide the necessary support to quality improvement efforts across their education system, so that the successes identified in their private school sector can be achieved in all schools and for all children.

7. Annexes

Annex 1: Details of private schools visited

Annex 2: Classroom observation form

Annex 1. Details of private schools visited

SCHOOL	GRADE LEVEL OBSERVED	SUBJECT	DURATION
J. C. Faye Memorial Lower Basic School	Grade 4 Grade 2 Grade 5 Grade 5	Science English English Social and Environmental Studies	35 Minutes 35 Minutes 35 Minutes 35 Minutes
SCHOOL A			
Ndow's Comprehensive Lower Basic School	Grade 4 Grade 1 Grade 3 Grade 6	English Mathematics Mathematics English	35 Minutes 35 Minutes 35 Minutes 35 Minutes
SCHOOL B			
8 Classes and 8 Lesson	Grade 1 – 1 Mathematics Grade 2 – 1 English Grade 3 – 1 Mathematics Grade 4 – 2 (1) English and (1) Science Grade 5 – 2 (1) English and (1) Social and Environmental Studies Grade 6 – 1 English		

Annex 2. Classroom observation form

CLASSROOM OBSERVATION FORM			Name of Senior Teacher					
Name of school		Name of Teacher: Qualified/Trainee/Unqualified						
Region								
Key: 1 = Good, 2 = Fair, 3 = Poor.			Date					
Standards	Attitude of teacher	Keen and willing to attend						
		Interested and active in school life						
		Smart in appearance						
	How well are pupils taught	Teacher's subject knowledge						
		Planning and preparation						
		Use of various teaching styles						
		Management of pupil behaviour						
		Marking and assessment of pupils' work						
		Recording of pupils achievement						
		Setting of purposeful homework						
		Asking of relevant and challenging questions						
		Involvement of pupils in their learning						
		Organisation of the class						
		Evaluation of lessons and planning						
		Evidence						Observation of lessons
								Scrutiny of pupils' work
	Lesson plans							
	Discussion with pupils							
	Discussion with teachers							

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ADEA is also a source of baseline information about education in Africa. It manages a number of databases on its activities, on external funding programs and projects, on educational statistics concerning Africa, and on African education specialists and professionals.

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