

ENHANCING THE TEACHER PROFESSION: KEY TO REVAMPING THE EDUCATION SECTOR IN NIGERIA

N. M. Kamoh¹, L. S. Ughili², A. A. Abada²

^{1,3}Department of Mathematics and Statistics, Bingham University,

²Department of Science, Plateau State Polytechnic,
NIGERIA.

¹ Mahwash1477@yahoo.com, ² loisnatty@yahoo.com, ³ aatubase@yahoo.com

ABSTRACT

Education is a living concept that continues to grow and develop on daily basis. The paper looked at necessary steps needed to enhance the teaching profession. Questionnaire was administered to 1000 males and females respondents. The data was analyzed using standard deviation method, the results (tables I & II) indicated high standard deviations (σ) of 38.16 and 107.83 respectively, revealing that, the factors are independent of one another. A number of challenges were identified and discussed. The research concluded with a number of far-fetched recommendations. Improved remunerations; regular payment of salaries and improved fringe benefits, among others can greatly motivate and enhance the teaching profession.

Keywords: Education, teaching profession, job satisfaction

INTRODUCTION

The development of every society depends on the nature and functionality of its educational system (Dewey, 1859-1952). Recently, The Action Congress of Nigeria (An opposition Party in Nigeria), observed, in Accra, Ghana by its National Publicity Secretary, Alhaji Lai Mohammed called upon the Federal Government to take an emergency action or 'Marshall Plan' to uplift the falling standard of education in Nigeria, saying education is key to the development of any society (Agency Reporter, 2012).

In a similar vein, a non-governmental organization, Millinet Foundation (MF), just like many others, have recently decried the low quality of teachers in most public schools in the country and urged the federal government to declare a state of emergency in the educational system without further delay.

These facts underscore the reasons many countries make frantic effort of providing functional education to their citizens through the provision of adequate manpower in the sector. In Nigeria, our educational system is currently faced with behave of challenges impacting negatively on the quality of graduates. Prominent among these challenges, is the shortage of sound and motivated teachers. This is largely because the art of teaching in Nigeria is still considered a vocation instead of a profession thereby offering many the opportunities to engage in it without going through the requisite professional training. Although, the National Policy on Education recognizes holders of National Certificate of Education (NCE) and degree holders in education as those qualified to teach in our primary and secondary schools, the teaching environment is still saturated with non-professionals who lack the basic skills to train the propose manpower to represent us in the future. More worrisome, is the fact that even with the inadequate professionals in the system, those in the field, are subjected to poor remunerations and motivations (Adelabu, 2005).

Sanusi (1998) opined that, the profession is beginning to receive the perception of second grade dangers, this explain the massive brain drained in the country's education sector and those who accept the offer, do so in anticipation of securing a better job outside the teaching profession in the nearest future. It is true that successive government in the country had made effort to correct the abnormalities in the sector with varying degree of successes; one of such steps is the setting up of the National Commission for Colleges of Education (NCCE) in 1989 with the sole mandate of accrediting and harmonizing courses uniformity in the teaching profession in Colleges of education in the country.

Similarly, in 1999, the Teachers Registration Council of Nigeria was established which immediately embarked on the registration of professional trained teachers at the start towards getting rid of non-professionals in the sector. Despite these efforts, it appears very little progress has been achieved when we begin to talk about the teaching profession in Nigeria. Teachers are poorly motivated and are dissatisfied with their living and working conditions (Adelabu, 2005).

Recent discoveries revealed that, prior to independence, teaching was considered by almost all sections of society as a highly respected profession. Teachers played key leadership roles in local communities and acted as role models. However, after Independence, when the demand for educated labour grew rapidly, many teachers left the profession to take up jobs elsewhere in the public and private sector. According to Obanya (1999) this marked the beginning of the teacher motivation crisis in Nigeria, as the public began to look down on those teachers who remained in the classroom as second class public servants. The growing tendency for school leavers to opt for teaching appointment only depend on if they are unable to find other more lucrative public or private sector employment further compounded this problem of lowered professional status (Taiwo, 1984). Recently Owusu (2004) the leader of the accreditation team of the National Commission for Colleges of Education remarked that the teaching profession in Nigeria had been relegated to the background and that teaching is not accorded the respect it deserves. As elsewhere, many factors affect teachers' motivation and job satisfaction levels in Nigeria. Adelabu (2005) classifies these factors according to three main categories, namely job context, job content, and reward system.

METHOD OF DATA COLLECTION

The research design for this study was the survey method using the questionnaire. As the variables are not under the control of the investigator, the survey is non-experimental.

The subjects were 1000 adults made up of males and females randomly selected from all areas of specialization in Plateau State of Nigeria from 2011 to 2012.

Table 1. Responses from the general public regarding some identified factors affecting the teaching profession in Nigeria

<i>Some identified factors affecting the teaching profession in Nigeria</i>	<i>Number of responses</i>
Low wages	180
Low status in the society	98
Lack of career advancement opportunities	170
High teacher-pupil ratio	125
Poor work environment	107
Inadequate fringe benefits	116
Irregular payment of salaries	204
Total	1000

The questionnaire was given to each person in the sampled group to identify a factor he or she feels is the problem affecting the teaching profession in Nigeria and to proffer a suggestion on how he or she feels will improve the profession most from the identified factors. The summary of the data collected is as shown in table 1 and 2.

Table 2. Responses from the general public proffering suggestions that will improve the teaching profession in Nigeria

<i>Some identified factors affecting the teaching profession in Nigeria</i>	<i>Number of responses</i>
Improvement in wages	285
Improvement in status in the society	40
Improvement in career advancement opportunities	70
Improvement in teacher-pupil ratio	20
Improvement in work environment	120
Improvement in fringe benefits	150
Improvement in payment of salaries	315
Total	1000

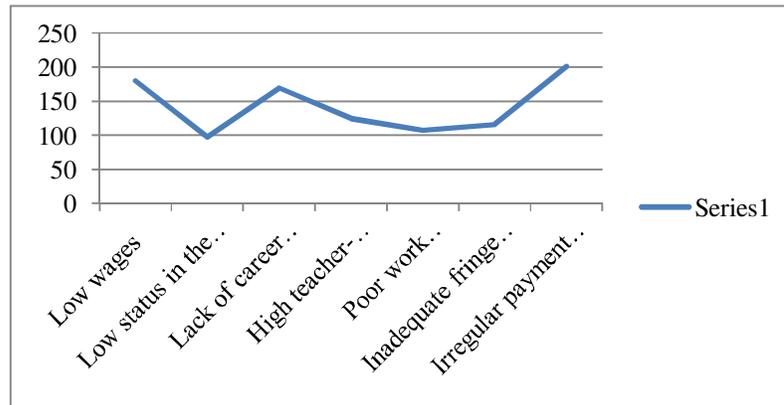


Figure 1. Responses from the general public regarding some identified factors affecting the teaching profession in Nigeria

Figure 1 does not show any form of linear relationship existing between the factors under investigation. This means each factor affects the teaching profession independently and this suggests that each of these factors can be treated independently. This argument is further supported by the high value of the standard deviation ($\sigma = 38.16$) obtained from the collected data in table 1.

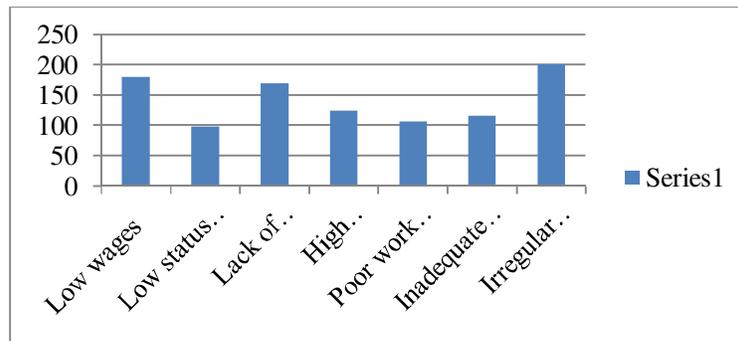


Figure 2. Bar chart of responses from the general public regarding some identified factors affecting the teaching profession in Nigeria

Figure 2 clearly identifies irregular payment of salaries, low wages and lack of career advancement opportunities among others as most of the factors affecting the teaching profession in Nigeria.

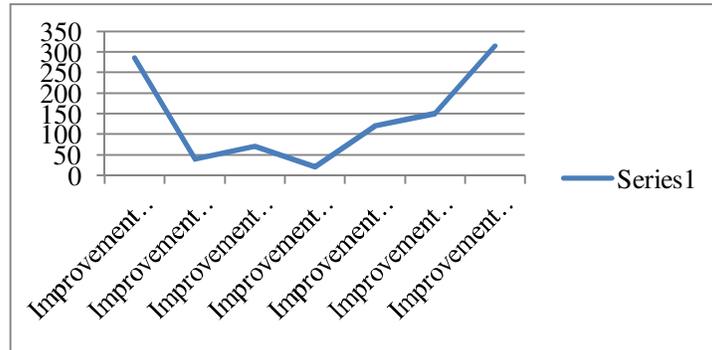


Figure 3. Graph showing the responses from the general public regarding the improvement in the identified factors affecting the teaching profession in Nigeria

Figure 3 does not show any known pattern of linear relationship existing between the factors under investigation. This means that, improving each of these factors independently can bring about the desired and required result in improving the teaching profession; this also suggests clearly that each of these factors does not depend on one another as indicated by the high value of standard deviation ($\sigma = 107.83$) in table 2.

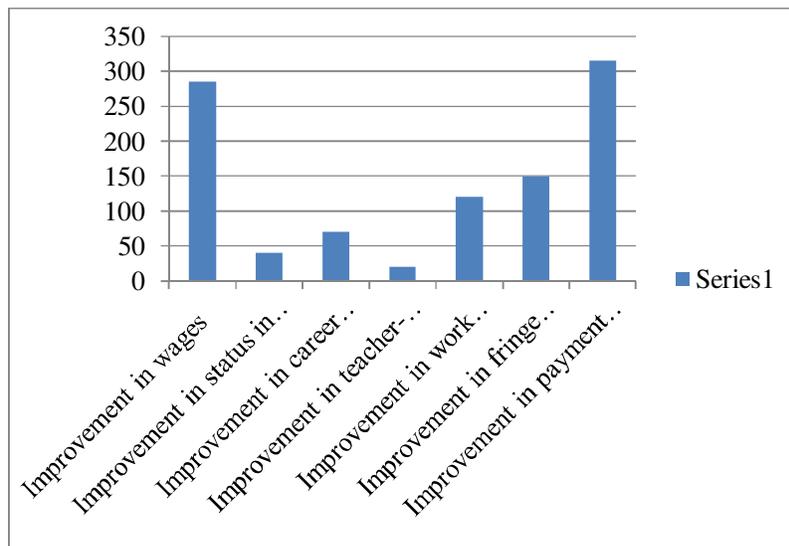


Figure 4. Bar chart showing the responses from the general public regarding the improvement in the identified factors affecting the teaching profession in Nigeria

Figure 4 clearly identifies improvement in the payment of salaries, wages and fringe benefits among others as most of the factors that requires urgent and necessary attention in order to address the problems associated with the teaching profession in Nigeria.

THE CHALLENGES FACING THE TEACHING PROFESSION

The research focuses on the key determinants of job satisfaction among teachers in Nigeria, the under listed challenges among others were identified to be the major problems bedeviling the teaching profession:

1. Low wages when compared with other professions

2. Low or virtually non-status in the society
3. Lack of career advancement opportunities
4. High teacher-pupil ratio
5. Poor work environment
6. Inadequate fringe benefits
7. Irregular payment of salaries

According to the study, these factors or conditions are responsible for low teacher morale and the difficulty in attracting and retaining quality personnel into the teaching profession.

Low Wages When Compared With Other Professions

Teacher's poor welfare is no longer news. Management experts have continued to lay emphasis on the important role motivation play in the managerial process, government should therefore learn from this management principle by paying special attention to remuneration of teachers in order to boost their moral and restore their faith.

The Udoji Commission in 1972 made the most impact on teachers' status and welfare in Nigeria. The major achievement of the Commission was that it harmonized the public sector pay by bringing all public sector personnel under one unified salary scheme and it also ensured that teachers enjoyed comparable salary status with other key public sector workers. The Commission recommended the creation of a uniform grading and pay scale for public servants, including teachers in order to ensure that the public sector is able to recruit and retain its fair share of scarce manpower and eliminate invidious pay comparisons between the public and private sectors. However, the Commission's bold attempt has been thrown to the trash bin by subsequent administrations, forcing the teachers to demand through the National Union of Teachers for a just and more equitable job evaluation, remuneration and grading of teachers as their counter parts in other professions (Adelabu, 2003).

Rousseau (2012) observed that, lack of satisfaction within the educational profession is bad news for children. Morgan and O'Leary (2004) noted that, "there is a growing body of evident that when teachers feel good about their work, pupil achievement improves." (p.73)

Today, poor remuneration of teachers in the country has turned the teaching profession that used to be the envy of all, a profession of mockery, which youths are now skeptical of going into. Students no longer fancy education as a course.

Teachers, out of desperation have decided to turn the profession lucrative by introducing all forms of fraudulent tendencies. The lecturers in a bid to leave exuberant and flamboyant life style on campus go the extra mile of recruiting students in their classes who serve as middlemen between them and the students, the middle men move round after every examination to inform their course mate that sorting of a particular course is in progress, the interested members will then give their registration number and the specified amount for the grade they want.

The era when students are graded on the basis of their intellectual abilities has been committed to the trash bin of history as lecturers now charge between two thousand naira and ten thousand naira depending on the grade one chooses.

Some lecturers equally turn attractive female students in their classes to sex partners with threat to fail anyone who proves stubborn to their advances. Female students are also known to offer themselves freely to the lecturers in order to get good grade during exams with the notion that they are using what they have to get what they want. Another cankerworm is cultism which is also a byproduct of the factors affecting the teaching

profession. It is contributing immensely to lower the standard of education in the country, members of this group usually relegate academic activities as secondary as they primarily attend to their group activities first, which is the more reason why some of them spend ten to eleven years in school for a course of four or five years.

They take delight in drinking, killing and maiming instead of developing their moral, skills and intellectual abilities which is the primary aim of education.

Low Status in the Society

In general, however, most informants believed teachers have lower status compared to other major professions. According to the Secretary-General of the Osun State teachers' union, the profession itself has contributed to the poor image it has in society. He cites cases where retired teachers have not been paid their benefits for months, those in the service are not promoted when they are due for promotion, and the mass promotion of teachers irrespective of their performance and achievements. Apart from this, the NUT script said the incessant summon of teachers by Ministry officials for certificate verification and the constant hunt for 'ghost-names' sends a negative image about the profession, and is demeaning to teachers.

The social status of teachers has been identified as an important factor impacting teacher morale and motivation (Baiké, 2002; Obanya, 1999). Where teachers feel society is dismissive of the profession, their commitment is undermined. Promoting teachers 'en masse', without basing it on an evaluative mechanism linked to job performance, has also been found to de-motivate many teachers in Nigeria (Sanusi, 1998). School leadership and management style are also important factors, which can either motivate or lower teacher morale and commitment. Nwankwo (1984), found that teachers feel highly motivated when they are consulted about decisions regarding their work. Unfortunately, too high a proportion of school managers (principals and head teachers) are highhanded and autocratic in their dealings with teachers (Ayeni, 2005). The attitude of inspectors towards teachers in supervising their work is another important work-related motivational factor. Bamisaye (1998) observed that, unfair administrative and supervisory practices tend to undermine teacher morale.

Lack of Career Advancement Opportunities

The teacher profession is currently faced with the challenges of career advancement opportunities, the key conditions that must be met by teachers in order to be promoted are:

- I. Satisfactory performance on the job of a teacher
- II. Technical skill in teaching methodology
- III. Evidence of impact on student learning achievement
- IV. An unblemished character
- V. Good relationship with students, colleagues, school authorities and parents

However, according to NUT officials, teachers have often expressed dissatisfaction with the promotion system because, in practice, teachers are promoted on the basis of their qualification and years of service rather than on the basis of the stipulated conditions for promotion. A survey revealed that, the promotion exercise tends to ignore evidence of teacher performance, and emphasis years of experience, irrespective of the quality of that experience. Consequently, in most cases, both good and bad teachers are promoted together.

Other cause of disaffection among teachers is the placement of teachers in Nigeria is lopsided. While some urban primary and even secondary schools are over-staffed with wives, children of the elites and their cronies, some rural areas have virtually no teachers. Census

conducted by SPEB revealed that teachers are concentrated in the cities as opposed to rural areas. For instance in urban schools, apart from a sizeable number of male teachers, the rest are females made up of the wife to a Director and their likes that end up teaching nothing but discussing their husbands and their businesses without any teaching responsibilities.

Another major source of teacher dissatisfaction in Nigeria arises from disparities between the teaching profession and other professions, such as nursing, with respect to the time and mode of payment of salaries, fringe benefits, promotion prospects and working conditions. Ubom (2002) argues that, although good salaries and their prompt payment are important motivating factors, there is evidence that other factors can undermine commitment to teaching. Akinwunmi (2000) and Ejiogu (1983) found that, what the typical low income earning teacher yearns for is a sizeable salary increase, and they conclude that the payment of a living wage would significantly enhance their commitment and performance.

High Teacher-Pupil Ratio

In Nigeria, the educational background, professional qualifications, experience and declared interest of teachers are taken into consideration when allocating classes and subjects to teachers. In other words, vacancies are simply not filled by any kind of teacher, but rather teachers' subject interests, their level of qualification and their teaching experience are factors which determine who goes to teach where. However, at some schools teachers are assigned classes and subjects purely on the basis of the vacancies and needs of the schools, rather than their interests and experience background. The official pupil-teacher ratio for primary schools is 1:40. While there are wide variations between schools and between states, the average PTR for the country as a whole never exceeded 40 during the 1990s (see Table 3). Thus, teacher supply has managed to keep pace with the rapid increase in enrolments due to UPE.

Table 3. Variations in pupil-teacher ratios in some selected states, 2000

<i>State</i>	<i>State Average</i>	<i>Highest LGaA</i>	<i>Lowest LGA</i>
Borno	39	96	26
Ebonyi	39	66	36
Rivers	50	65	28
Kaduna	44	99	20
Katsina	39	83	24
Lagos	37	60	14
Niger	45	75	25
Oyo	36	88	22
Plateau	43	80	11
Taraba	51	68	14

Note: LGA = Local Government Authorities

Source: World Bank Country Status Report

Poor Work Environment

The work environment is also an important determining factor in teacher motivation. The teacher's working environment in Nigeria has been described as the most impoverished of all

sectors of the labour force NPEC, Nigeria (1998), observed, facilities in most schools are dilapidated and inadequate. Sanusi, (1998), Adelabu (2003), & Kazeem (1999) has recommended that greater attention should be given to improving work-related conditions of teachers to improve the quality of education. In particular, there should be improvements in the supply of teaching and learning materials and general classroom environment to improve student learning. Kazeem (1999) and Akinwumi (2000) found that private school teachers appear more motivated than teachers in public schools. Regular payment of salaries and much lower pupil-teacher ratios are key reasons for this. Muheeb (2004) found that the conditions for teaching are more conducive in private schools than found in public schools in Nigeria. A survey of the condition of public primary school classrooms in the North Central geopolitical zone provided shocking revelations in most public schools, (see table 4).

Table 4. Condition of primary school classrooms in North Central zone, Nigeria

<i>State</i>	<i>2005 Enrolment A</i>	<i>No. of classrooms required B</i>	<i>No. of classrooms in Good condition C</i>	<i>No. not in use D</i>	<i>Shortfall E</i>	<i>Percentage shortfall $\frac{E}{B}$</i>
Benue	641,621	18,332	5,671	5,220	12,661	69.1
Kogi	813,669	23,248	5,883	4,135	17,365	74.7
Kwara	393,395	11,240	6,281	3,362	4,959	44.1
Nasarawa	426,383	12,182	2,594	2,522	9,588	78.7
Niger	373,834	10,681	4,460	2,437	6,221	58.2
Plateau	663,892	18,883	3,078	3,998	15,803	83.7

Source: Education data Bank, FME 2005

Inadequate Fringe Benefits

Depending on their grade, civil servants in Nigeria are entitled to various fringe benefits, most notably car and housing loans, free medical services, and early payment of pension and gratuity. From grade 7 and above, civil servants can receive a car loan and, below this grade, a motorcycle and bicycle loan. All other workers receive vehicle basic allowances. Research showed that the car loan is the most sought-after and visible fringe benefit in the civil service. With regard to housing loans, various state governments in Nigeria have instituted a policy of granting a revolving loan for teachers in order to assist them build their own houses. The reality, however, is that the majority of teachers do not receive these allowances.

Survey has also revealed that the issue of salaries has been the biggest motivational issue for teachers in Nigeria in recent times. Generally, teachers and civil servants in each state have been under one salary structure, based on the harmonized public service salary scale (HAPSS). It is agreed that, teachers' salaries have improved, as delays in salary payments have been reduced to a minimum. Differences, however, exist in teacher allowances such as special allowances for science teachers, or duty allowances. Some states in the federation, for example, Kebbi, Sokoto and Zamfara, all in northern Nigeria, pay higher teacher salaries than their counterpart in the civil service. But, generally, since the Udoji Commission Review in 1972, teachers and other civil servants have had their salaries consolidated under a single salary scheme. Despite improvements in teacher salaries, it is agreed that there is still dissatisfaction among teachers. Table 5 shows the entry and retirement grade levels for each of the three categories of teachers in the state teaching services and Table 6 show the entry and retirement grade levels in the state health management board. The two tables cannot be compared for any reason at both ends.

Table 5. Showing the entry and retirement grade levels for each of the three categories of teachers

<i>Qualifications in the teaching profession</i>	<i>Entry point</i>	<i>Salary at entry point per month</i>	<i>Salary at retirement point per month</i>
Grade II	GL 05/02	#8,132.00	GL 9 =#25,953.50
NCE	GL 07/02	#12,933.00	GL 13 =#63,383.58
B. Ed	GL 08/02	#16,198.00	GL 16 =#98,276.92

Table 6. Showing the entry and retirement grade levels for each of the three categories of Nurses

<i>Qualifications in the Medical profession</i>	<i>Entry point</i>	<i>Salary at entry point per month</i>	<i>Salary at retirement point per month</i>
Comm. Health Asst.	CONTISS 6/1	#55,200.08	8/15 = #175,802.25
Nurse	CONTISS 7/1	#89,434.75	12/11 = #235,627.08
MMBS	CONTISS 9/1	#103,987.08	14/9 = #370,955.92

Irregular Payment of Salaries

Amadi (1983) observed that, the irregular payment of salaries is one of the major problems facing the teaching profession in Nigeria. According to Mbanefoh (1982) practicing teachers are particularly concerned about the late payment of salaries and the non-payment of fringe benefits rather than other non-monetary incentives. School principals often complained about teachers not willing to work because of delays in payment of their salaries Ayeni (2005), & Ubom (2002) found that in Nigeria, prompt payment of salaries induced greater commitment to teaching.

Kazeem (1999) opined that, teachers and other school workers tend to remain contented and reasonably motivated as long as salaries are paid on time and they are promoted regularly. Eton, (1984), identified the payment of salaries, allowances and promotion as the key factors that shape teacher attitudes towards their work.

CONCLUSION

Job satisfaction and motivation are very essential to the continuing growth of educational systems around the world. It is now time for government to take a very pragmatic and decisive action in addressing the problems in the teaching professions and the attendant challenges facing the educational system.

In the light of the above, we tend to add our voices to the numerous calls on the present government in the country for an overhaul of the system for the development of future leaders. In addition, an appreciable salary structure should be worked out as what is obtainable in other professions to burse teachers moral and enhance dedication and professionalism to duty and hardworking ones be rewarded accordingly.

Similarly, regular training should be a priority for teachers in this era of social and economic rebirth, because it is predicted that there will be many benefits for both the learner and the teacher. It will also help in the modification of the role of the teacher, who in addition to classroom teaching will have more skills and responsibilities.

It therefore behoves on governments at all levels to come to terms with realities, that education is the bedrock of every society that is in search of the best path to the development it deserves. Hence the need for government to urgently come to the aid of the teaching profession in Nigeria cannot be over emphasized. An aggressive effort should commence to flush out all unqualified persons from the teaching profession.

RECOMMENDATION

1. Teachers should be trained so that they can meet up with new challenges.
2. Teachers' welfare should be given priority by government to avoid unnecessary strikes in our educational institutions while more qualified teachers should be employed to curb with the present shortage of teachers in our schools.
3. The sector can be very attractive if a good salary package is introduced, it will bring back the best brains that have run to other sectors because of poor remunerations.
4. The work environment should be made conducive, because teacher's working environment in Nigeria has been described as the most impoverished of all sectors of the labour force; facilities in most schools are dilapidated and inadequate.
5. Greater attention should be given to improving work-related conditions for teachers to improve the quality of education. In particular, there should be improvements in the supply of teaching and learning materials and general classroom environment to improve student learning.
6. Regular payment of salaries and much lower pupil-teacher ratio must be encouraged for better productivity.

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