A Comprehensive Situation Analysis of Teachers and the Teaching Profession in Sierra Leone

Final report presented to the Teaching Service Commission

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Contents

Abbreviations

ASC	Annual School Census
BECE	Basic Education Certificate Examination
CPD	Comprehensive Professional Development
EBKUST	Ernest Bai Koroma University of Science and Technology
ESP	Education Sector Plan
FBC-USL	Fourah Bay College – University of Sierra Leone
FGDs	Focus Group Discussions
GPE	Global Partnership for Education
HEC	Home Economics Centers
HTC (P)	Higher Teachers' Certificate (Primary)
HTC (S)	Higher Teachers' Certificate (Secondary)
JSS	Junior Secondary School(s)
MEST	Ministry of Education, Science, and Technology
MMCET	Milton Margai College of Education & Technology
OECD	Organisation for European Co-operation and Development
PIN	Personal Identification Number
PRSP	Poverty Reduction Strategy Plan
PTR / PQTR	Pupil-Teacher Ratio / Pupil-Qualified-Teacher Ratio
SABER	Systems Approach for Better Education Results
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SSS	Senior Secondary School(s)
TALIS	Teaching and Learning International Survey
TC	Teachers' Certificate
TLC	Teachers' Lower Certificate
TSC	Teaching Service Commission
UIS	UNESCO Institute of Statistics
UNESCO	United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organisation
UNICEF	United Nations Children Fund
WASSCE	West African Senior Secondary Certificate Examination

Foreword

The Teaching Service Commission (TSC) is pivotal to education reform in Sierra Leone. The system has been remarkably resilient in surviving the turbulence of eleven years of civil war, long periods of economic decline, and a more recent 2-year crisis due to the Ebola pandemic. These disruptive trends posed threats to the functioning, expansion, and quality of education. Despite such turbulence schools survived, teachers persevered, and the education system achieved significant expansion. More than ever, more children are now enrolled and attending primary and junior secondary school in Sierra Leone. This is in line with the national commitment to provide all children with access to nine years of quality basic education as a right.

However, it seems that such rapid expansion has been achieved at the expense of the quality and integrity of the education system. Performance of learners has declined, school standards have been eroded, allegations of malpractice are rampant, resources for teaching and learning are scarce, funds for teacher salaries are in crisis, too many teachers remain unqualified/untrained, the professional status of teachers is being undermined, and public confidence in education has plummeted. The TSC must play its part in tackling these problems, with the full involvement of teachers and cooperation of education officials. As Chair, I affirm that the TSC takes this challenge seriously. In line with our mandate we have developed professional standards for teachers and managers. We are also working on mechanisms and guidelines for teacher policy development, as well as for teacher recruitment and management. In addition to developing and rolling out such oversight and management tools, we need to better understand the situation of teachers and the teaching profession, as a basis for designing major reform strategies and plans.

This study describes and analyzes the situation of teachers and the teaching profession in Sierra Leone and compares this with other African and developing countries. It covers pertinent issues such as governance, costs, and professional status; as well as teacher numbers disaggregated by gender, location, qualification, levels, experience, etc. Its findings and recommendations are couched in the context of national as well as global norms/standards; yielding implications for strategies to reform the teaching profession. It also reviews changing patterns and trends in the provisions for education and training of teachers; and what this implies for sustainable changes in the size, quality, and costs of an optimal national teaching force.

A key focus of the study is on whether the current teaching force is adequate and affordable, for Sierra Leone's educational needs, budgetary means, and development goals. The report suggests a need to develop strategies for "right-sizing" the teaching force, based on such factors as: too many teachers in the system but too few qualified teachers; too many male teachers compared to female teachers; dwindling numbers of committed long-term professionals; and inequitable deployment of qualified teachers across districts. Such factors suggest that right-sizing strategies will involve: reducing total numbers whilst increasing percentage of qualified teachers; restoring gender balance; attracting and retaining committed professionals; and deploying qualified teachers more equitably across the system.

The goal of right-sizing should be to cultivate a good quality national teaching force that is affordable and fit-for-purpose.

This report contends that Sierra Leone cannot afford to support and maintain its current teaching force, given the present and foreseeable fiscal realities. The study highlights two dimensions of affordability that must be addressed. First is that affordability as the capacity to make sustainable annual budgetary provision to cover all expenditures dealing with adequate remuneration and incentivization of all teachers in the teaching force. The challenge for Sierra Leone is that the teacher payroll is by far the largest item in the recurrent budget, yet it does not cover all salaries. Teachers in so-called unapproved schools (30 per cent of all schools) are not on the official payroll, which is said to be burdened by the problem of "ghost teachers". The TSC is committed to working with Government and development partners to ensure adequate remuneration and incentives for all teachers through sustainable budget allocations. We believe that the recently cleansed teacher payroll and on-going right-sizing of the teaching force will contribute to resolving this fiscal impasse.

The second dimension of affordability is the capacity of the national teaching force to consistently deliver value for money in fulfilling the expectations set for the teaching profession. The quality of the teaching force will no longer be judged simply on the qualifications of teachers, but also on the results they deliver as professionals. The TSC will therefore ensure that expectations for professional teachers, set out in the Professional Standards for Teachers and School Leaders, are clearly communicated. Also, in assessing value for money from teachers, the TSC will consider indicators like: learning achievement of pupils; contribution to individual and community development; and efforts in continuous professional development.

Finally, in thanking the consultant for this insightful and pragmatic report, the TSC will review and endeavor to implement its key recommendations. We will support all teachers as they strive to become part of a coherent, productive, and good quality teaching force that is made up of committed and dedicated professionals. We will encourage and support the resuscitation of subject associations and other communities of practice that foster excellence in the teaching profession. We will also work closely with pre-service teacher education and training institutions and providers of in-service training programmes, to reform pre-service and in-service provisions for enhanced professional development and improved coordination of teacher supply and demand. The TSC will strongly advocate for policies and strategies that provide appropriate levels of remuneration and incentives to attract (and retain) the best candidates into the teaching profession.

Staneala M. Beckley, PhD

Chair, Sierra Leone Teaching Service Commission
Better Teachers, Stronger Nation

Executive summary

The protracted 20-year genesis of the Teaching Service Commission reflects the developmental twists and turns in Sierra Leone over decades of crisis. In a new era of promise, the TSC's task is both to manage the teaching force and reform the teaching profession. It must restore norms, rekindle hope, and facilitate progress for teachers as professionals. So, this report provides TSC with grounds for public-sector reform, and supports its normative role of managing teachers.

The study generates evidence of the macro-reality facing teachers and the teaching profession in Sierra Leone. It uses this broad "grounded knowledge" to offer TSC a platform to make decisions and plan strategies for reforming the profession and managing teachers. Basically, the study uses evidence to **describe** the macro-reality of teachers and the teaching profession. It goes on to **analyze** the meaning of the evidence and what it implies for the TSC. Then it goes further to **compare** the emerging picture of reality in Sierra Leone with the reality in other countries. This three -pronged approach — **describe, analyze, and compare** — is used **iteratively** in the study to capture (as much as possible) abroad picture of the real world of teachers and the teaching profession. The emerging conclusions and recommendations are summarized here in sub-sets for reforming the profession and managing the teaching force. They are presented in detail in Chapter 10.

Right-sizing the teaching force

A critical challenge for the TSC is to work with relevant parties to nudge the teaching force to the right size for the changing needs and circumstances of the country. This requires balancing a size that is adequate and fit-for-purpose, with a size that is affordable and manageable.

Conclusion # 1: In principle, the current (2016) size of the teaching force at 63,535 teachers is surplus to requirements. It yields a pupil-teacher ratio (PTR) of 32:1 that is well below almost all African countries, and below the target of 40:1 set in the ESP. This size is also unaffordable. The teacher payroll is the largest item in an annual budget that is prone to shortfalls. Yet this payroll covers only 34,643 teachers and it clearly cannot afford to include all teachers. Teachers in 30 per cent of all schools (including 62 per cent of community schools) are not included in the payroll because these schools are "unapproved".

Conclusion # 2: Anomalies due to double-counting of some 2,640 teachers in the annual school census, and the presence of "ghost teachers" could make the size of the teaching force less than 63,535. Also, growth of the school-age population, and efforts to enroll 390,000 school-age children who are out of school, could increase the number of pupils in the system. These factors could potentially yield a PTR closer to 40:1, so the size of the teaching force may not be as surplus to requirements as currently estimated.

Conclusion # 3: Between 2004/5 and 2010/11 the size of the teaching force doubled for primary schools and tripled for secondary schools, to cater for expansion of the system. This created a financial time bomb that has still not been diffused. Payroll

cleaning will stop corrupt practices but will not change government's inability to pay salaries for all genuine teachers in the system.

Recommendation # 1: *The TSC must develop a comprehensive strategy for right-sizing the teaching force, based on the recommended PTR of 40:1; which should be implemented in all districts and schools. This might require a freeze on recruitment of unqualified teachers to reduce numbers whilst increasing the percentage of qualified teachers in the teaching force. In support of this, the TSC should develop transparent criteria and procedures for TSC district offices to use in adjusting the recruitment, deployment, and transfer of teachers for schools in their districts.*

Recommendation # 2: *The strategy developed by TSC for right-sizing the teaching force must incorporate and address issues of equity, quality, and robustness in the national teaching force. This strategy should be implemented and monitored mainly through the TSC district offices.*

Recommendation # 3: *The TSC should advocate for (and participate in) negotiations between the Government of Sierra Leone and development partners, to agree on transitional budget support for a teacher payroll that will ultimately provide domestic resources to cater for all genuine teachers in a right-sized teaching force. The national and external resources needed in a successful transition process can be estimated only after successful right sizing and cleaning of the teacher payroll.*

Promoting equity in the teaching force

The characteristics of the teaching force raise issues of equity in terms of gender balance and the deployment of teachers across administrative regions, as well as different levels of the system.

Conclusion # 4: There is a disproportionate and persistent gender imbalance in the system. Male teachers make up 73 per cent of the teaching force on average. This imbalance may be part of the spike in teacher recruitment of 2004/5 to 2010/11. It starts at primary level with 29 per cent female teachers. It gets worse at JSS and SSS levels with only 16 per cent and 11 per cent of female teachers respectively.

Conclusion # 5: The deployment of teachers across regions is stable and appears to be equitable. The East, North, South and West respectively have 20 per cent, 32 per cent, 20 per cent and 28 per cent of all the teachers. But this fails to reflect disparities in pupil-teacher ratios at district, chiefdom, and school levels; which are well documented in previous studies. So, deployment across regions may need to be nudged annually to improve on PTR in the East and South, for a more equitable teaching force.

Conclusion # 6: The percentage of teachers deployed at primary, JSS, and SSS levels are in line with expectations. Specialist subjects in JSS and SSS require more teachers than the primary level. But some amount of right-sizing may be required to curtail the practice of teachers working at levels for which they are not qualified. Data for

2016 indicates that there are an estimated 10 per cent of JSS teachers and 30 per cent of SSS teachers who are not qualified for the level at which they teach.

Recommendation # 4: *As part of the strategy for right-sizing the teaching force, it is imperative for the TSC to include measures to attract, recruit, and retain more female teachers; especially at JSS and SSS levels where they can mentor and encourage pubescent girls to stay on in school and complete the highest level of education possible.*

Recommendation # 5: *As part of the strategy for right-sizing the teaching force, TSC district offices should manage the recruitment, deployment, and transfer of teachers more equitably and efficiently. Making use of the TSC district offices in his way will contribute to the effective implementation of decentralization as a public-sector reform policy.*

Recommendation # 6: *TSC district offices should monitor the relative size of the teaching force at primary, JSS, and SSS, for schools in their districts; to ensure numbers and qualifications match the needs of each of these levels. Such use of TSC district offices will also contribute to effective implementation of decentralization as a public-sector reform policy.*

Enhancing quality in the teaching force

A common proxy for teacher quality is qualifications. Judgement on quality of teachers (and of schools) is usually based on examination results of pupils. The TSC would need to enhance quality in these terms, as well as taking account of other attributes of quality in the teaching force.

Conclusion # 7: The teaching force has a quality problem with an average 34 per cent of all teachers classified as unqualified/untrained. The problem is most serious at the primary level where 42 per cent of teachers are unqualified, compared to JSS and SSS levels, where 27 per cent and 12 per cent respectively of teachers are classified as unqualified. A further 10 per cent of JSS teachers and 30 per cent of SSS teachers are classified as under-qualified for these levels. But there is a positive trend with the percentage of unqualified teachers declining from 45 per cent in 2010 to 34 per cent in 2016.

Conclusion # 8: Based on the performance of pupils in public tests and examinations, the teaching force in Sierra Leone is of poor quality. Results for EGRA/EGMA, NPSE, BECE, WASSCE are poor and not getting better. TSC/MEST may wish to recruit a task force of "trouble-shooting" teachers, to provide temporary support for schools with the worst results in various subjects.

Recommendation # 7: *The TSC should develop a strategy to reduce the percentage of unqualified teachers in the system. This must include a freeze on recruitment of unqualified teachers and a campaign (incentives) to discourage private/community schools from recruiting such teachers.*

Recommendation # 8: *The TSC should consider a national campaign to encourage teachers to strive for better results of their pupils in public examinations. This could involve publishing these results under the theme of "How are the teachers doing?". Schools (and their teachers) with the best value-added or improved performance by pupils should be publicly recognized and rewarded by TSC. Schools with consistently poor results should be given temporary support with a special task force of "trouble-shooting" expert teachers.*

Cultivating robustness and resilience in the teaching force

Having survived disruptive periods of crisis, Sierra Leone requires a robust and resilient teaching force to safeguard the system against future crises. This requires a stable force in which teachers are committed to a lifelong career. It also needs a good mix of age groups as well as a mix of experienced and novice teachers. Such a teaching force will require teachers who can maintain traditional standards, as well as teachers who are more open to innovation and adaptation.

Conclusion # 9: The teaching force lacks significant numbers of mature and seasoned teachers. One third of the teachers are less than 30 years old, and two thirds are below 46 years old. Most teachers are therefore young or middle-aged. This suggests that teaching is not being treated as a lifelong career in which most professionals stay on to retirement.

Conclusion # 10: The years of experience of teachers shows a peculiar and disturbing pattern for the teaching force. If most teachers were to stay in the profession as a career until they retire, there would be a normal distribution curve for years of experience. Instead the data shows that only 16 per cent of teachers have experience of 20 years or more; whilst 60 per cent of teachers have 10 years or less, and as much as 34 per cent of teachers have less than 5 years of experience.

Conclusion # 11: There is a lack of career pathways that must discourage innovation amongst the teachers in Sierra Leone. Teachers are concerned that their profession is becoming a "dead end" job with limited prospects for advancement in their career. There is also a lack of transparency in applying rules/regulations for recruitment and promotion. This creates a dissonance between the official rhetoric about procedures and the reality of what happens in practice.

Recommendation # 9: *The TSC should work with teacher education colleges and the MEST Inspectorate Division to attract and retain cadres of teachers who would stay on to retirement in their career. This entails screening college applicants for commitment, encouraging serving teachers to be committed, and providing incentives for lifelong career teachers. The TSC may also wish to do a formal study on making teaching attractive as a lifelong career.*

Recommendation # 10: *The TSC should propose and campaign for mid-career incentives to retain teachers who may be considering other options after 15-20*

years of teaching. This might include automatic salary bonuses and eligibility for promotion based on years of service.

Recommendation # 11: *Opportunities for advancement in the teaching profession must be increased and diversified, to recognize, utilize, and reward various competencies that teachers develop during their career. This requires revised career structures with new posts/incentives.*

Setting expectations for professional teachers

The World Bank's SABER network highlights the fact that teachers need to be clear about what is expected of them as professionals and how they will be assessed during their career. The concern is with competent classroom performance and contribution to the development of pupils, as well as involvement with the mission of schools, communities, and society.

Conclusion # 12: Teachers are currently getting confusing messages on what is expected of them as professionals; with two distinct sets of expectations inadvertently competing for ascendancy. A minimalist set of expectations stresses content and pedagogy (what to teach and how to teach), including a donor-funded project on the use of prescribed lesson plans. A maximalist set of expectations has a wider array of competencies including why teach and what is the outcome of successful teaching. This continues to be an integral part of three-year teacher education courses.

Recommendation # 12: *The TSC should develop, publish, and generate public support for a clear set of expectations of teachers, to guide those striving for a successful career in the profession. These expectations must be linked to the national curriculum that spells out learning needs of pupils and provides a vision for education and development. Expectations must also embrace the standards, codes of conduct, and other professional guidelines laid out for teachers.*

Managing the dynamics of teacher supply and demand

Conclusion # 13: There is no coordination between demand for teachers (recruitment) and the supply of qualified teachers (education/training). The strategy that TSC adopts for recruitment should at least send signals to teacher education institutions on enrolment and graduating rates. Without such signaling, it is market forces (or students' perceptions) that will shape enrolment rates and determine graduation and recruitment into the profession.

Recommendation # 13: *TSC, MEST, and TECs must establish a strong professional relationship with constructive exchange of data and information relating to planning. This will include data on trends in the size, quality, adequacy, affordability, and robustness of the teaching force; as well as enrolment and graduation rates from pre-service teacher education courses. All such data and information should be posted on the TSC website, in the interest of transparency and to curtail a growing culture of "gatekeeping" on institutional data.*

Matching learner needs with teacher preparation

Conclusion # 14: There is a disturbing disconnect between the needs of learners as highlighted in the new curriculum framework and teaching syllabuses for basic education, and the pre-service teacher education courses. Pre-service teacher education courses have not yet included the new basic education curriculum and syllabuses in their work.

Conclusion # 15: Teacher education institutions do not have provision to follow their graduates into the schools to assess early performance and use feedback to improve on teacher education courses. Graduating students are on their own, as the teacher education institutions have nothing more to do with them after graduation.

Recommendation # 14: *The TSC should advocate for inclusion of the new national basic education curriculum and syllabi in all pre-service teacher education courses. TSC should also provide support for in-service courses by making available simplified curriculum notes that were developed as part of the new basic education curriculum. These notes cover the five main topics of: equity and inclusion; assessment and accountability; quality and integrity; partnership and stakeholder roles; and social cohesion and celebration of diversity. These are critical aspects of what the new basic education curriculum seeks to achieve in Sierra Leone.*

Recommendation # 15: *The TSC district offices should establish a working relationship with the TECs closest to their district, for exchange of information on the needs of schools and how new teachers are performing. TSC should encourage and support TEC interventions (workshops) based on the needs of teachers in the schools.*

Negotiating models of professional teacher development

Conclusion # 16: Decisions must be made on the preferred path to an adequate teaching force with qualified teachers to deliver outcomes for pupils and schools in Sierra Leone. The choice is between teachers as practitioners trained on what to teach and how to teach (subject knowledge and pedagogy); and teachers as professionals who make key decisions to facilitate learning, and know why they teach, as well as what successful outcomes should be (apart from exam results).

Recommendation # 16: *The TSC should design and advocate for a model of professional development that helps to consolidate the current confusing situation. One option would be to focus on intensive but short periods of education and training (especially in-service) to enhance competencies in the use of lesson plans to deliver on the new syllabi. Another option would be to consolidate and strengthen current pre-service courses and in-service training, to enhance competencies in the full spectrum of knowledge and skills needed to build expertise and cultivate experience in teaching as a profession. A third option would involve a combination of the first and second options to create Comprehensive Professional Development (CPD) models.*

PART A · Introduction and methodology

CHAPTER 1 · Background

"The purpose of every effort at situational analysis is to re-think prevailing ideas, to re-conceptualize today's dominant paradigms, to re-direct existing programs, to re-focus conventional interventions, and to give birth to a repositioned product."

— Prof. Pai Obanya in Sanyal (2013)

1.1. Background to the situation analysis

The Teaching Service Commission (TSC) was over twenty years in the making, as shown in Chart 1.1. This protracted genesis reflects the challenges experienced as education and all other sectors broke free from cycles of crisis, and the country finally emerged from two decades of State fragility into an era of recovery and development; with the promise of prosperity.

The changing fortunes of teachers and the teaching profession are an integral part of the vicissitudes of education and development over the years. Emergence of the TSC is evidently part of the public-sector reform process designed to respond to these development challenges. So, this study contends that the TSC was not created simply to manage an existing teaching force efficiently. Such a simplistic approach to the mandate of the TSC would deny the complexity, and ignore the dynamics, of the situation facing teachers and the teaching profession in Sierra Leone.

From a ***normative perspective***, TSC has a clear mandate, with responsibility to address ***Teacher Management***. Schools throughout the country (primary, JSS, and SSS) need teachers to facilitate learning and development. Ideally these teachers should be: qualified and trained; recruited, retained, and promoted fairly/transparently; deployed efficiently/equitably across schools and districts; held to prescribed standards of practice and code of ethics; rewarded with fair remuneration and conditions of service; supported and guided along career pathways that are well-defined; encouraged to pursue opportunities for continuous professional development; and given responsibility to promote and uphold educational standards.

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CHART 1.1. Protracted genesis of the Teaching Service Commission

Date	Progress towards a Teaching Service Commission
1995	The National Education Policy recommended the establishment of a Teaching Service Commission (TSC), with responsibility for Teacher Management in Sierra Leone.
2004	The Education Act of 2004 (Section 43) provided for the transfer of responsibility for Teacher Management from MEST to a Teaching Service Commission, when it is established.
	The Education Sector Review for the first Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP I) supported the establishment of the Teaching Service Commission.
2005	The Management and Functional Review of the Ministry of Education, Science, and Technology (MEST) in 2005 highlighted the role of TSC and deferred action on key issues for TSC to take up.
2010	The National Education Policy of 2010 assigned the following roles to the TSC: registration and licensing of teachers; teacher performance & development; teacher management operations – recruitment, replacements, transfers, promotions, etc.; and teacher/employer relations.
	The Education White paper of 2010 supports the establishment of a Teaching Service Commission.
2011	As part of Public-Sector Reform, the Teaching Service Commission Act of 2011 relieved MEST from direct involvement in all issues related to implementation of policies in Teacher Management.
2013	The 3rd Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (Agenda for Prosperity – 2013)
	An Operational Framework for the Teaching Service Commission was developed for implementing the policy and provisions relating to establishing a TSC in Sierra Leone.
2015	Presidential appointment of the TSC Chair was formally approved by Parliament in October 2015.
2016	The TSC was formally inaugurated in August 2016. Parliament approved the appointment of various TSC Commissioners during the year.
2017	The TSC initiated processes of staff recruitment, setting up of offices, procurement of supplies, and commissioning of baseline studies and other research. Symbolic handover of teacher records from MEST to TSC was carried out (January 2018).

Such normative matters define what the TSC *ought to be doing*. They are central to its responsibilities and challenges. Indeed, work is going on with: standards for teachers and leaders; processes for recruitment and registration; policy guidelines for teacher development; and teacher payroll verification.

But, from an *empirical perspective*, the reality of what the *TSC must contend with* is much more complex and dynamic. Education in Sierra Leone has survived decades of disruptions, including: a destructive 11-year civil war; a devastating two-year Ebola epidemic; and cycles of economic decline. The result is that: education standards have been eroded; quality of schooling is under threat; teaching/learning resources are restrictive; education financing is precarious; school management has weakened;

teacher competencies are being questioned; public trust in schooling is fading; and integrity of the education system is in decline. Anecdotal evidence from this study also suggests that there is much cynicism about education reform due to a perceived problem of "pervasive corruption". During focus group discussions (FGDs), many teachers voiced concern not only about remuneration and conditions of service, but also about: poor school management/support; unsatisfactory/ill-defined career structures; non-transparent criteria for promotion; and absence of well-defined pathways for their professional development. These concerns raise existential questions about teaching as a profession and highlight what some practitioners have described as their struggle to cope with an unending period of "adaptation to decline" in education.

However, anecdotal evidence from this study also suggests that teachers share a new sense of hope that the TSC can address the debilitating factors which erode their morale and threaten the future of the teaching profession. So, the TSC now needs to mirror the broader public-sector reform process that is central to recovery and development of all sectors in Sierra Leone. For this to happen, the TSC will need a comprehensive situation analysis of teachers and the teaching profession to: meet the expectations of teachers; set out priorities for action; plan operational strategies; and develop its human resource competencies.

1.2. Purpose, focus and context of the situation analysis

This situation analysis seeks to provide the TSC with an overview of key macro issues affecting teachers and influencing the nature of the teaching force in Sierra Leone. It also provides an evidence base for understanding the complexity and dynamics of the situation that the TSC must grapple with as it strives to execute its mandate. In general, the analysis provides insights into past trends, current realities, and future projections, which together paint a picture that defines and characterizes the world of teachers and the teaching profession in Sierra Leone today.

CHART 1.2. TSC responsibilities in line with public-sector reform in Sierra Leone

Public-sector reform focus	TSC responsibilities and focus
Staff Recruitment and Right-Sizing	Teacher Management Operations – recruitment, replacements, transfers, promotions, etc. (Right-Sizing)
Performance Management	Teacher Performance and Deployment (Professionalism)
Institutional Strengthening	Registration and Licensing of Teachers
Pay Reform	Teacher/Employer Relations

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The focus of the study is on:

(a) *Teachers as practitioners.* What is the current situation, recent trends, and future projections in their numbers, profiles in terms of qualifications and experience; as well as patterns of their deployment across districts and levels of the education system; and the prevailing terms and conditions of service that shape recruitment, retention, and governance in teacher employment.

(b) *The teaching force* as a coherent entity that transcends the number of teachers in the country and provides a basis for smart investments to support quality education for all. This involves the evolution of the teaching force as a viable, quality-oriented, and resilient body; and trends in its size, cost, composition, structure, quality, adequacy, and affordability.

(c) *Teachers as professionals.* What makes teachers professionals, as well as practitioners. What are the internationally-agreed criteria that define teaching as a profession? What are the local processes through which teachers can become professionals in Sierra Leone?

(d) *The teaching profession in Sierra Leone.* What is the state of teaching as a profession; how do teachers perceive their profession; how do others perceive teaching? The contemporary situation and recent trends in teaching as a profession in the country: its standards, level of integrity, attractiveness, reliability, perceived social status, and economic viability; as well as its organizational structure, governance, and reward patterns.

(e) *The role of teachers and the teaching profession* in making education a transformative force for progress, stability, and development of individuals, families, communities, and the nation. Essentially, the contribution of teachers to achieving the sustainable development goals (SDGs) through quality education for all; amidst challenges of poverty and recurring fragility.

Evidence on these focus areas can support the TSC in the discharge of its functions of cultivating, enabling, and managing successive cadres of teachers to build the most appropriate teaching force for Sierra Leone. The ultimate mark of success for the TSC will be its ability to recruit, retain, and manage competent teachers who can facilitate quality learning, as part of an evolving teaching force that is effective, efficient, robust, sustainable, and affordable for national development. So, the focus is not only on the contemporary situation of teachers as practitioners, but also on features that define teachers collectively as a national teaching force, and criteria that characterize teaching as a credible and desirable profession in Sierra Leone.

This situation analysis also sketches out a national and international context to throw light on Sierra Leone's performance with teachers and the teaching force, in line with national education goals and the global education goals to which the country is committed. The report also highlights challenges and opportunities in moving towards an adequate and affordable teaching force of qualified/

experienced teachers to facilitate quality and integrity in the education system. This provides the TSC with insights into strategies that would help to cultivate the professional ethos and standards needed for Sierra Leone to achieve its long-term education goals.

1.3. A conceptual framework for understanding the study

In general, this situation analysis should not be understood as an academic exercise. It does not seek to provide evidence for testing specific hypotheses; nor does it try to prove or disprove theories about teachers and education in Sierra Leone. It is a pragmatic exercise, designed to generate evidence which can be marshaled to provide a platform for action. Such evidence builds up into *"actionable knowledge"* and provides a credible basis for the TSC to develop the vision, strategies, and interventions to execute its mandate. The TSC should be able to use the outcomes of this study as a platform for managing teacher numbers and enhancing teacher quality; as well as for cultivating a teaching force that is adequate, affordable, and quality-oriented.

To this end the situation analysis is couched within a multi-dimensional framework that combines *"normative description"* with *"meaningful analysis"* and *"insightful comparison"*. This helps to outline, explain, and analyze the current situation of teachers and the teaching force in Sierra Leone. The study also takes backward glances to illuminate some trends that have influenced and shaped the current situation of teachers and the teaching force. The study also projects into the future to explore possible options for action, and to map out potential pathways for progress in the task of managing teachers and enhancing the teaching profession in Sierra Leone.

CHAPTER **2** > **Approach, methodology and data sources**

2.1. Outline of the general approach of the study

This study uses a three-pronged approach to map out evidence on characteristics of teachers and the teaching force in Sierra Leone. The first prong is descriptive and presents numbers in both aggregate and disaggregated forms to highlight the reality of: the numbers of teachers; deployment of teachers; size of the teaching force; gender composition of the teaching force; and other characteristics such as qualifications and years of experience. This prong also presents: the legal parameters; costs and financing patterns; policies; structures; processes; and regulations that govern teachers and the teaching profession. The study uses this descriptive prong to provide baseline data, presented in tables, graphs, and charts, that can inform decision-making by the TSC.

The second prong is analytical and provides "explanations", by giving more meaning to what the data implies for the work of the TSC. The study progresses from describing characteristics of the teaching force, to analyzing its adequacy, affordability, quality, and robustness. It presents an analysis of student-teacher ratios, teacher costs, education financing, etc.; to reach conclusions and make recommendations concerning TSC's mandate. The study also moves from describing teachers and the teaching force in terms of qualifications and years of experience, to analyzing: professional competencies; career structure; prospects for advancement; and professional status of teachers. This prong presents data on teacher aspirations, motivations, perceptions, and constraints; all of which influence their morale, integrity, and performance. This highlights points of leverage which the TSC can use to design strategic interventions for executing its mandate.

The third prong is comparative and places the situation of teachers and the teaching profession in Sierra Leone in a broader context. It compares the country's data with data from other countries, as well as with global standards (e.g., SDGs). Evidence is marshaled to compare the situation of teachers and the teaching force in Sierra Leone with other countries and groups of countries, as well as with global standards. For example, the study classifies and compares teacher policy in Sierra Leone with eight teacher policy goals identified by the World Bank's SABER network as critical for teacher performance and student learning. It also assesses where Sierra Leone stands on global indicators of progress such as those set for the SDGs.

CHART 2.1. International goals and indicators for teacher policy

SABER teacher policy goals	Indicators set for education SDGs
1. Setting clear expectations for teachers;	• Percentage of teachers with the *minimum qualifications* required to teach in pre-primary, primary and secondary education levels.
2. Attracting the best into teaching;	
3. Preparing teachers with useful training and experience;	• The ratio of pupils to *trained teachers* in primary education and secondary education.
4. Matching teachers' skills with students' needs;	
5. Leading teachers with strong principals;	• Percentage of primary teachers and secondary teachers who participated in at least one *professional development activity* in the past year.
6. Monitoring teaching and learning;	
7. Supporting teachers to improve instruction; and	
8. Motivating teachers to perform.	

The use of this three-pronged approach is designed to provide the TSC with a credible baseline of descriptive data, analytical insights, and comparative perspectives. These are key requirements to support the management of teachers and reform of the teaching profession in Sierra Leone.

2.2. Use of mixed methodology for actionable knowledge

The study makes use of both quantitative and qualitative methodologies for analysis, to provide an evidence base for informed decision-making and action. This makes the study grounded and heuristic rather than a classical empirical study. It moves back-and-forth in iterative steps, to progressively reveal meaning and action points in the data. This situation analysis does not seek to provide "proof" or "causality". Rather it tries to reveal associations and plausible relationships that can guide further studies and inform short term decision-making and strategic interventions. The data for this type of mixed method analysis comes from various sources such as:

- Official education statistics (mainly the annual school census reports)

- Other official education data reports (e.g., monthly Situation Room reports)

- Institutional records (mainly teacher education colleges - TECs)

- Published and unpublished documents (Policies, Acts, MEST Reports, Syllabus, etc.)

- National and international literature on teachers and the teaching force

- Knowledgeable Individuals in Sierra Leone; (FGDs, interviews, questionnaires)

- Key groups in the teaching profession - FGDs (groups, associations, unions, etc.).

To obtain credible data, the mixed-method analysis used a variety of instruments such as: records search; document reviews; structured and semi-structured interviews; focus group discussion (FGDs); structured and semi-structured questionnaires, small town-hall style meetings.

A major concern arising from this study is the immense and unforeseen difficulties encountered in obtaining basic data from some sources. Unfortunately, the conclusion is that a disturbing "gate-keeping" phenomenon seems to be emerging in Sierra Leone, when it comes to obtaining even routine data from some sources on various aspects of the education system. To mitigate this negative development, *it is recommended that TSC and MEST take steps to publish and regularly update important data on their websites*. This should include number of students enrolled and graduated annually in the various teacher education courses; as well as number of teachers recruited annually for various levels of the education system. All such data should be readily available and disaggregated by gender and other important variables.

2.2.1. The heuristics of knowledge making

The importance of this situation analysis to the work of the TSC depends on how far it produces "knowledge" that can be used to make credible decisions and support pragmatic action. There are various ways of producing such knowledge from the available building blocks of information, data, a nd other forms of evidence. This

study uses a blend of analytical tools to produce a set of tentative findings that constitute "grounded knowledge". This type of "knowledge" can be acted upon with some justification, since it is rooted in what seems to be the case in practice. However, "grounded knowledge" is tentative and subject to a reiterative process whereby it is tried out in practice, to improve it. The improved version is then acted on, with a view to making further improvements. So, the study generates grounded knowledge, which can be improved through a heuristic loop that moves from "theory to practice" and from "practice to theory".

2.2.2. The praxis of actionable knowledge

In this study, the concept of praxis entails a back-and-forth learning process, between theory and practice. The study generates "theory" in the form of actionable knowledge, which TSC can put into practice. TSC should then seek to learn from the outcomes of such practice, to modify the initial actionable knowledge or theory. The TSC can then act anew on the modified theory.

Praxis therefore means that the findings of this study can be acted upon, but TSC must also learn from the outcomes of such actions so the findings can be further refined for future action. As such, the study avoids a deterministic outlook on its findings as being right or wrong. The findings of this situation analysis simply highlight what has emerged so far from the "ground", which the TSC can use to make decisions, design strategies, and plan interventions.

Such tentative findings may need to be refined as the situation on the ground changes. For example, the basis or "grounded knowledge" for recommendations on right-sizing the teaching force may be refined as: out-of-school children are absorbed in the system; or the anomaly of double-counting teachers in the annual school survey is resolved; or more schools become approved and teachers are put on the payroll. These factors change the reality of what exists on the ground, so the grounded knowledge for action would need to change accordingly.

2.2.3. A platform for evidence-based decisions and actions

Using the above analytical principles, the study provides TSC with a fair baseline or knowledge platform on which to make credible decisions and act fairly and transparently to reward teacher competencies and reform the teaching profession. But TSC should also have mechanisms to learn from such decisions and actions and to take account of changes on the ground, in a way that deepens the understanding of what the findings of this study imply for the work of the TSC.

CHAPTER 3 **Teacher numbers
and characteristics**

The starting point for the grounded and heuristic analysis used in this chapter is the total number of teachers in the education system. This is the size of the teaching force that the Teaching Service Commission (TSC) will have to manage. Disaggregating this number can provide initial insight into the characteristics of the teaching force through a review of: gender balance, regional balance, and deployment across education levels. These variables can yield some descriptive characteristics that begin to give meaning to the overall number of teachers in the school system. Additional characteristics of the teaching force are explored by analyzing variables such as qualifications and years of experience of teachers. The chapter further examines quality, robustness, and sustainability of the teaching force through an overview of qualifications, recruitment, supply, and retention of teachers.

The data is then interrogated further to see if the total number of teachers as it stands, provides an adequate, affordable, and sustainable teaching force that is "fit for purpose" in Sierra Leone. These factors are assessed through disaggregated data for different levels of education, as well as for different regions in the country. Finally, data on Sierra Leone's teaching force is compared with data from other countries/regions. This comparative exercise helps to position the teaching force in relation to regional and global standards. This in turn gives further meaning to teacher numbers for: adequacy, right-sizing, quality, affordability, and robustness of the teaching force.

Through this three-pronged and reiterative process of describing, analyzing, and comparing, the chapter paints a broad and representative picture of teachers and the teaching force in Sierra Leone. This is used to highlight significant characteristics and map out critical issues for attention and action by the TSC. The chapter also highlights points of leverage through which the TSC can influence positive change in managing teachers and reforming the teaching profession.

3.1. Overview of the current situation

Latest data from the 2016 Annual School Census (ASC) gives the total number of teachers in the school system in Sierra Leone as 63,535. This is the current size of the teaching force that the TSC will have to manage, but this number does not

mean much on its own until it is disaggregated. Out of this total of 63,535 teachers, 46,388 (73 per cent) are male teachers and 17,147 (27 per cent) are female teachers. In terms of the level of the school system, 37,828 (59.5 per cent) of these teachers are in primary schools; 15,122 (23.8 per cent) are in junior secondary schools; and 7,007 (11.1 per cent) are in senior secondary schools; whilst the remaining 3,569 (5.6 per cent) are in pre-schools. These disaggregated features of teacher numbers are summarized in Table 3.1. below.

Deployment of teachers across the levels of education seems to be consistent with the size of each sub-sector. Primary schools have many more pupils than JSS and SSS, so there are invariably more teachers at primary level. The most striking aspect of the teacher numbers in Table 3.1. is its high gender imbalance; with female teachers constituting only 29 per cent of teachers in primary schools. This gets worse, so that females are 16 per cent of the teachers in JSS and a mere 11 per cent of the teachers in SSS. This critical issue will be explored further as a major challenge that the TSC must explore and address.

TABLE 3.1. Teacher numbers disaggregated by level and gender

Gender	Number of teachers in 2016 by gender and level of the school system				
	Pre-school	Primary	JSS	SSS	Totals (%)
Male	597	26,868	12,668	6,255	*46,388 (73%)*
Female	2,972	10,960	2,454	752	*17,147 (27%)*
Totals *(%)*	3,569 (5.6%)	37,828 (59.5%)	15,122 (23.8%)	7,007 (11.1%)	*63,535 (100%)*
% Female	83%	29%	16%	11%	27%

Source: Compiled from data in Annual School Census for 2016.

A gender-balanced teaching force is important for Sierra Leone because of the need for female teachers as role models. The education system has a high drop-out rate for girls, due to problems such as early marriage, teenage pregnancy, and gender-based violence in schools. Progress is being made with major investments to safeguard and enhance girls' enrolment, retention, and completion of basic education and beyond. However, such investments would invariably need to be complemented with a balanced teaching force in which female teachers can guide, counsel, and inspire girls to complete school.

In these circumstances, *it is imperative for the TSC to devise strategies to attract, recruit, and retain more female teachers; especially at JSS and SSS levels* where they can play critical roles to safeguard the well-being of pubescent girls and encourage them to continue and complete their schooling.

Apart from gender imbalance, it is critical to check for other equity issues in the teaching force, such as deployment across administrative regions. Table 3.2 shows that the highest percentage of teachers (32 per cent) are in the Northern Province, followed by the Western Area with 28 per cent of the teachers; whilst the Eastern Province and the Southern Province have 20 per cent each of the teachers.

TABLE 3.2. Teacher numbers disaggregated by region

Number of teachers by gender and administrative region (2016)				
Eastern Province	Northern Province	Southern Province	Western Area	Total
12,427 (20%)	20,645 (32%)	12,857 (20%)	17,606 (28%)	63,535 -100%

Source: Compiled from data in Annual School Census for 2016.

Again, these numbers do not tell the whole story. The number of learners in each region must be factored in, to determine if the deployment of teachers across the regions is equitable. Does each region have a fair share of the available teachers to serve the needs of its learner population?

More generally, the key issues about the total number of teachers in the system involve questions such as: are there enough teachers, too many teachers, or too few teachers in Sierra Leone's education system? What are the implications of this number for equity and efficiency? Can the country afford this size of teaching force? What are the recent trends in teacher numbers? Answers to such questions depend on standards set for student-teacher ratios at different levels of the education system; as well as patterns of deployment of teachers at these various levels, and distribution of teachers across administrative regions. So, total number of teachers must be disaggregated to determine adequacy, and to judge if the teaching force is fit for purpose.

3.1.1. Quality of the teaching force

Teacher qualification usually serves as a proxy for teacher quality, especially in official context when promotion is determined. But there is also a tendency among stakeholders (parents and learners) to assess teacher quality based on performance of their students in examinations. This study used three simple categories to describe teacher quality in terms of their qualifications and training. First, there are teachers who have no formal training to be teachers. Second, there are those teachers who have qualifications that are below the requirements for the education level at which they are teaching. Third, there are those teachers who are qualified for the level at which they are teaching. These categories reflect the indicators for SDG4 which include: Percentage of teachers with the *minimum qualifications* required to teach in pre-primary, primary, and secondary education levels.

Table 3.3 below shows the percentage of teachers for these three qualification categories, and it indicates that at every level of Sierra Leone's education system 50 per cent or more of the teachers are qualified to teach at that level. Junior secondary schools have the highest percentage with 63 per cent of teachers qualified to teach at this level, and a further 10 per cent have some qualification but do not meet the requirements for teaching at this level. For senior secondary schools, 58 per cent of the teachers are qualified to teach at this level and a further 30 per cent have some qualification that is below what is required to teach at this level. The primary level also has 58 per cent of its teachers qualified to teach at the level, but the rest of the teachers at this level (42 per cent) have no formal training for teaching.

TABLE 3.3. Percentage of qualified teachers by level of the education system, 2016

Qualification status	Pre-school	Primary	JSS	SSS
No Formal Training for Teaching	50%	42%	27%	12%
Below Level Requirement			10%	30%
Qualified to Teach at this Level	50%	58%	63%	58%

Source: Compiled from data in Annual School Census for 2016.

These numbers in Table 3.3 indicate that Sierra Leone is a long way from achieving the target set in its Education Sector Plan (ESP) for percentage of qualified and trained teachers at primary and JSS levels. The ESP sets a target of improving the percentage of qualified teachers in primary schools from 54 per cent in 2010 to 100 per cent in 2018; and in JSS from 61 per cent in 2010 to 100 per cent in 2018. Indeed, considering that in 2004 the percentage of qualified teachers in primary and secondary education were 59 per cent and 90 per cent respectively, it can be argued that the impressive expansion of the education system since 2004 has been achieved at the price of a stagnation or decline in the percentage of qualified teachers, and hence in the quality of the teaching force.

However, from another perspective, trends indicate that there have been gains in the percentage of qualified teachers overall, due mainly to investments in the expansion of teacher education courses and institutions. Figure 3.1. shows that the percentage of teachers with no formal training declined from 45 per cent to 34 per cent between 2010 and 2016. At the same time the percentage of teachers with formal qualification (such as TC, B.Ed.) increased from 54 per cent to 62 per cent over the period.

FIGURE 3.1. Trends in distribution of teachers (%) by qualification, 2010–2016

Source: Sierra Leone Annual School Census data 2010–2012, 2014–2016.

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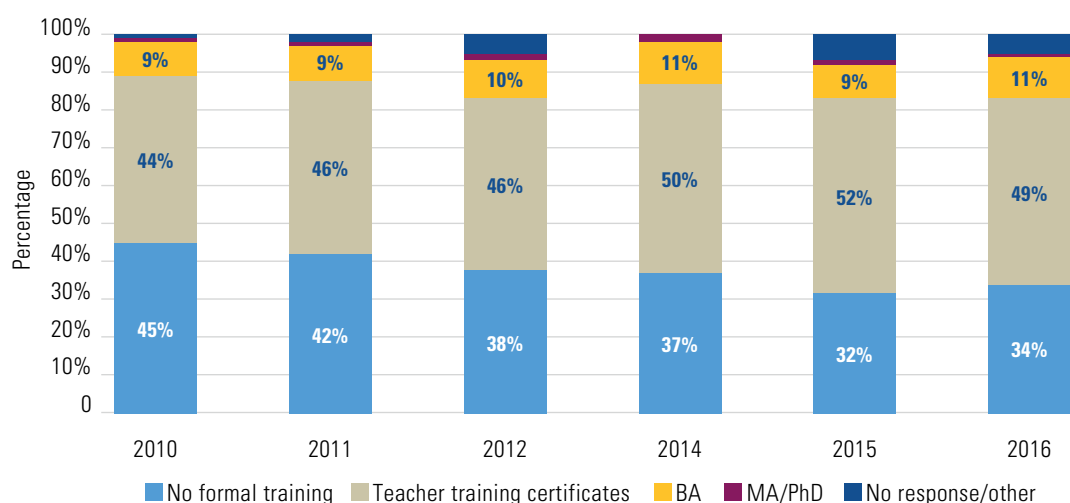
The decrease in teachers with no formal training from 2010 to 2016 can be attributed to teacher training certificates and BA degrees. However, there is a significant percentage of teachers whose qualifications are unknown, particularly in 2016 in which 5 per cent of teachers claimed 'Other" for their teaching qualifications. Teachers with MA or PhD degrees has remained constant at 1- 2 per cent.

3.1.2. Adequacy of the teaching force

The true measure of adequacy of the teaching force is not in the absolute number of teachers, but in the number of teachers relative to the number of pupils at each level of education. This is the ratio of Pupils to Teachers or Pupil-Teacher Ratio (PTR) at each level. There is some consensus on the optimum value of PTR for effective learning and teaching at different levels of education. For instance, there would be fewer pupils per teacher at JSS and SSS levels than at primary level, because specialist subjects taught at JSS and SSS will require more teachers than for primary level where teachers are normally generalists, teaching all subjects.

As Sierra Leone progresses towards a quality teaching force, what would be critical is the ratio of **pupils to *qualified teachers (PQTR)***; not just ratio of pupils to teachers (PTR). Table 3.4 shows both ratios for the different levels and on average for the education system, in 2016.

TABLE 3.4. Pupil-teacher ratios by level of the education system

Pupil-teacher ratios for 2016	Pre-school	Primary	JSS	SSS	All
Pupil-Teacher Ratio (PTR)	23	38	21	24	32
Pupil-Qualified-Teacher Ratio PQTR	48	69	35	44	57

Source: Compiled from data in Annual School Census for 2016.

In the same way, Table 3.5 shows both ratios, but this time for the administrative regions of the country, as well as on average for the whole education system in 2016.

TABLE 3.5. Pupil-teacher ratios by administrative region

Pupil-teacher ratios for 2016	East	North	South	West	National
Pupil-Teacher Ratio (PTR)	35	34	33	25	32
Pupil-Qualified-Teacher Ratio PQTR	72	64	65	37	57

Source: Compiled from data in Annual School Census for 2016.

3.1.3. Affordability of the teaching force

In addition to the adequacy of the teaching force it is important to examine if this is affordable for the country. Sierra Leone is committed to the global education movement and has expanded access to school despite financial constraints and socio-economic challenges faced during many years of crisis. This success is due in part to support from development partners, but there has also been increased allocation of domestic resources to education. The challenge of maintaining an expanded education system raises issues of affordability and sustainability, especially for the payroll budget. Already teachers constitute the largest group of public-sector employees, and teachers' salary continues to be the largest item by far on the country's annual budget. In 2014 for instance, payroll expenditure for teachers was much higher than for civil servants, or for the military or the police as shown in the table below.

TABLE 3.6. Payroll expenditures for teachers and other personnel

Category of personnel	Actual payroll expenditure (2014)
Teachers	389,512 million Leones
Civil Servants	281,152 million Leones
Police	121,429 million Leones
Military	95,566 million Leones

Source: Compiled from Annual Government Budget for 2014.

This scale of expenditure is proving to be unsustainable within the current financial envelope of the Government. More importantly, the current payroll expenditure for teachers does not cover the full picture of teachers' salary. Efforts to reconcile the teachers' salary bill with available budget resources have so far concentrated on cleaning the teacher payroll to eliminate so-called "ghost teachers" and prevent double pay for teachers working in two-shift schools. There is some optimism that the latest of these efforts will identify names to be removed from the payroll, but this is more about eliminating corrupt practices, than significantly reducing the size of the teaching force.

Moreover, these efforts divert attention from the "elephant in the room" when it comes to the teacher payroll. Between 2004/05 and 2010/11 the number of primary school teachers virtually doubled from 19,317 to 38,125 and the number of teachers in secondary schools tripled from 5,580 to 17,194. This potential budget shock has been contained largely because teachers in so-called unapproved schools (34 per cent of all schools) are not on the government's teacher payroll.

In addition to financial constraints and budgetary shortfalls, measures of affordability of the teaching force can be assessed along important dimensions such as:

(a) Maintaining surplus numbers of teachers relative to what is required for effective delivery of teaching services in the school system. There is anecdotal evidence

that teaching is being used as an employment buffer in the economy, making government reluctant to cut out surplus teachers or remove "ghost teachers" from the payroll.

(b) Poor or inefficient deployment and use of teachers based on their average work load, as compared to productivity levels of other professionals. There are claims that teachers are not fully employed, which is why some can afford the time to seek further work in double shift schools or even outside of the teaching profession.

(c) High costs of teachers (escalating qualifications), compared to value of service delivered and possibility of services being delivered by less costly (and less qualified) teaching force. This is buttressed by the fact that gaining additional qualifications is one of the few ways of advancing a career in teaching. Teachers earn more or get promoted for additional qualifications that do not necessarily add value to classroom practice or student learning.

3.1.4. Robustness of the teaching force

The concept of robustness concerns ability to withstand shocks, adapt to changing realities, move forward with new practices despite obstacles; and continue to maintain established standards in the face of difficulties. In a robust teaching force there is a commitment to teaching, both as a profession and a lifelong career. It will also have a good balance between those keen to maintain traditions and those willing to embrace innovations; whilst all strive to promote standards and achieve excellence in professional practice. So, one key feature of a robust teaching force is the age profile of teachers. This will typically show a mix of young and old teachers in a normal age distribution curve. Majority of teachers will accumulate in the middle of the age profile, and there will be fewer teachers in the higher and lower age ranges, as older teachers retire, and younger teachers join the profession. More importantly, the experience profile of the teaching force is a critical indicator of robustness. Here again majority of teachers would accumulate in the middle range of experience, with fewer teachers in the most experienced or least experienced ranges.

In contrast to these expectations, *the data shows that the teaching force in Sierra Leone is young and inexperienced*. ASC data for 2015 shows that almost 60 per cent of teachers are younger than 41 years old, and a third of the teachers have less than 5 years teaching experience. Table 3.7 below shows that 60 per cent of teachers have less than ten years of teaching experience. These profiles of age and experience in the teaching force suggest several possible trends in play, for teaching as a profession and career in Sierra Leone.

First, *there is a high attrition rate which does not allow for an accumulation of experienced teachers in the teaching force.* It seems that young people are willing to teach, but do not show commitment to teaching as a profession or a lifelong career. Indeed, anecdotal evidence from knowledgeable individuals claim that *teaching is treated as a "holding area" for young people whilst they seek opportunities for further studies or for entry to more lucrative professions.*

Second, there may be a high level of frustration with teaching as a career that creates "burn-out" and causes even older teachers to leave the profession before retirement. Table 3.7. shows that *teachers do not stay on to retirement. Only 16 per cent of teachers have more than 20 years of experience in the profession; whilst 60 per cent have experience of 10 years or less.*

TABLE 3.7. Number and per cent of teachers by years of experience, 2016

< 5 Yrs.	6–10 Yrs.	11–20 Yrs.	Yrs.	Yrs.	>40 Yrs.	No response
20,913	15,964	14,714	5,449	3,704	422	1,241
34%	26%	24%	9%	6%	1%	2%

Source: Compiled from data in Annual School Census for 2016.

3.2. Profiles of the national teaching force

The above overview has provided broad descriptions of the teaching force and flagged emerging issues such as: gender imbalance; equitable deployment (level/region), quality (qualifications), and pupil-teacher ratios (PTR/PQTR). These will now be analyzed further and compared with data from other countries and regions, to provide useful profiles of the national teaching force.

3.2.1. Pupil-teacher ratios in the national teaching force

PTRs serve as indicators of effectiveness and efficiency in the use of teachers. For example, a low PTR of say 20:1 can be taken to indicate that there will be effective teaching in the system since teachers have on average a small class size. However, this same PTR of 20:1 also suggests that teachers are not being used efficiently, since these teachers could do just as effective a job with a larger class size of 30 (or even 40). So, the challenge in dealing with PTR of a teaching force is to balance effectiveness with efficiency in the use of teachers.

The second challenge is to reduce the gap between PTR and PQTR. A large gap indicates a high percentage of unqualified teachers in the system. The smaller the gap the better things are. Teaching can be assumed to be effective since the great proportion of learners is being taught by qualified teachers. The issue then would be if, on average, these teachers have a manageable class size for them to teach effectively. What is more important in assessing a teaching force then is ratio of pupils to qualified teachers (PQTR).

The data for 2016 suggests that Sierra Leone has some way to go in closing the gap between PTR and PQTR as shown in table 3.8. below, for the different education levels. However, there is some progress with pupil-qualified-teacher ratio. The latest PQTR for primary school level is 69:1, which is close to the national target of 65:1 by 2018, set in the Education Sector Plan (ESP – 2014-2018). But the huge gap between PTR and PQTR for primary level indicates that there is an unacceptably high percentage of unqualified teachers in primary schools. This may explain the modest national target set in the ESP, of 1 qualified teacher to 65 pupils in primary schools by 2018.

TABLE 3.8. Pupil-teacher ratios and gaps in PTR by education level, 2016

Education level	PTR	PQTR	GAP in PTRs
Primary	38:1	69:1	31:1
Junior Secondary	21:1	35:1	14:1
Senior Secondary	24:1	44:1	20:1
All	32:1	57:1	25:1

Source: Compiled from data in Annual School Census for 2016.

In comparative terms, *the average PQTR of 57:1 is well above the benchmark of 40:1 set by the Global Partnership for Education (GPE) for its partner countries and adopted as a national standard in Sierra Leone.* Indeed, the GPE lists amongst its results achieved, the fact that: *"Close to one-third of GPE partner countries had an average of 1 trained teacher for 40 students or less in 2014, up from one-quarter in 2013."*

Table 3.8 suggests there may be inefficient use of the teaching force in Sierra Leone, with a PTR of only 32 pupils for each teacher. But it also suggests there may be constraints on effective teaching, with an average of 57 pupils to each qualified teacher. This poses a major challenge for the TSC, especially as recent trends indicate that the PTR has remained constant since 2010. On average PTR has changed only slightly from 2010 to 2016, varying from a low of 29:1 to a high of 32:1 as shown in Figure 3.2. In much the same way, Figure 3.3 shows that PTR has been constant at all levels of the education system (primary, JSS, and SSS) between 2010 and 2016.

Pupil-teacher ratios have remained fairly constant from 2010 to 2016, ranging from 29-32 students per teacher.

FIGURE 3.2. Average PTR for 2010-2016
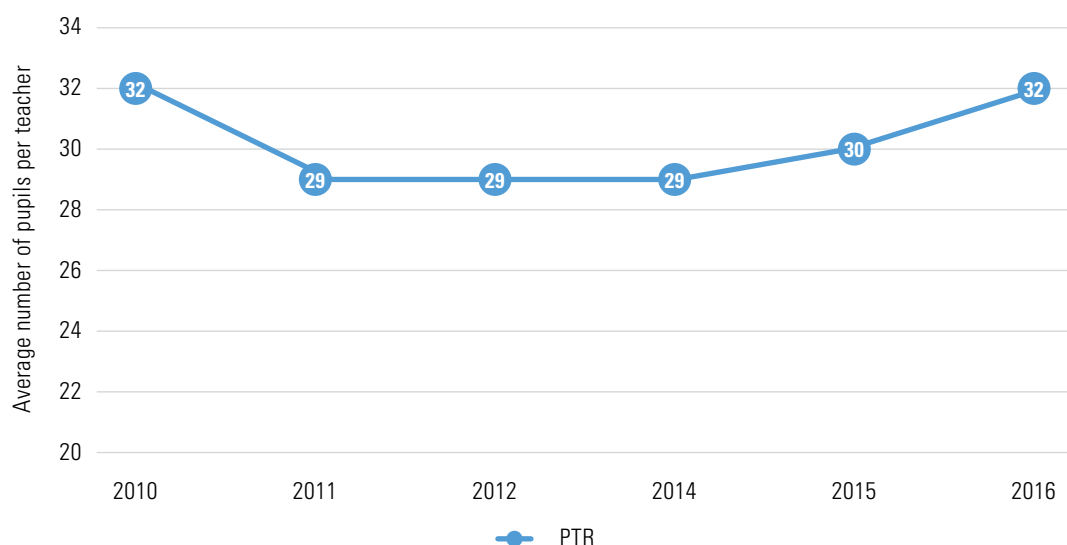
Source: Sierra Leone Annual School Census data 2010–2012, 2014–2016.

Pupil-teacher ratios have remained fairly constant across all levels from 2010 to 2016. The highest pupil-teacher ratio is at the primary level, ranging from 33 to 38 students per teacher. Pupil-teacher ratios at the preschool, JSS and SSS levels are significantly lower and have not changed significantly since 2010.

FIGURE 3.3. PTR by education system level for 2010–2016
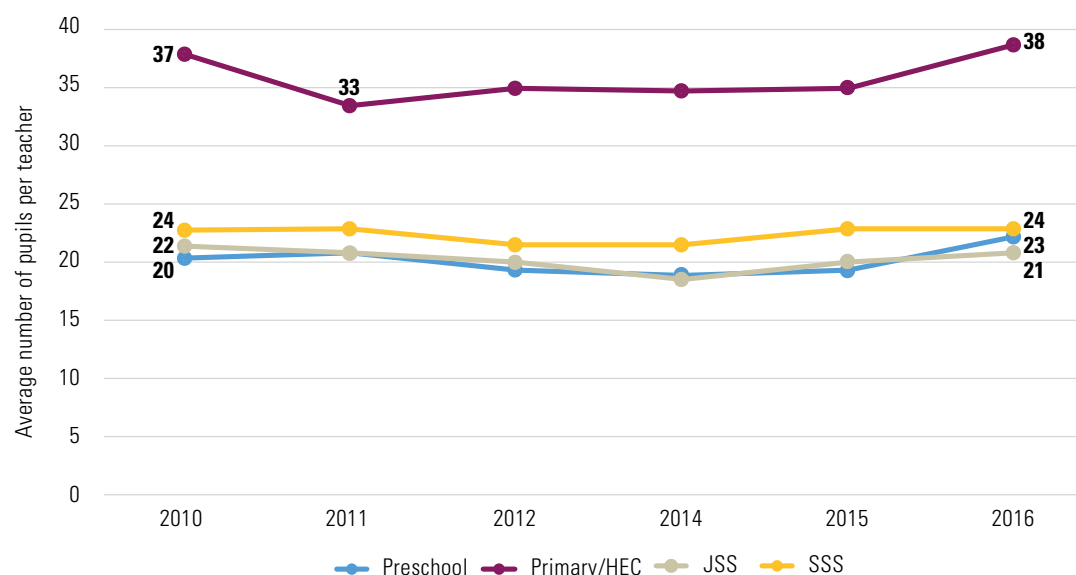
Source: Sierra Leone Annual School Census data 2010–2012, 2014–2016.

The positive interpretation of this stagnating PTR is that teacher recruitment has kept pace with the expansion in enrolment at all levels of education. On the negative side, the huge gap between PTR and PQTR suggests that a high percentage of this recruitment involves unqualified teachers. Another positive conclusion from the data is that the percentage of unqualified teachers in the system is gradually but steadily being reduced as shown in Figure 3.4 for 2010 to 2016.

The ratio of pupils and qualified teachers has decreased from 2010 to 2016, from 66 to 57 students per qualified teacher.

These results suggest that the *TSC must develop a comprehensive strategy for improving on the ratio of pupils to qualified teachers (PQTR) across all levels of the education system*. Some of the elements to be considered for such a strategy would include:

(a) An outright ban on recruitment of unqualified teachers by the TSC, accompanied by an advocacy and communications campaign designed to discourage private and community schools from recruiting unqualified teachers.

(b) Allowing for attrition in the teaching force, by encouraging (with incentives) unqualified teachers to leave the profession if they can find viable alternatives.

(c) Increased recruitment of qualified teachers (especially female teachers) in line with what is required to right-size the teaching force.

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FIGURE 3.4. Average PQTR for 2010–2016
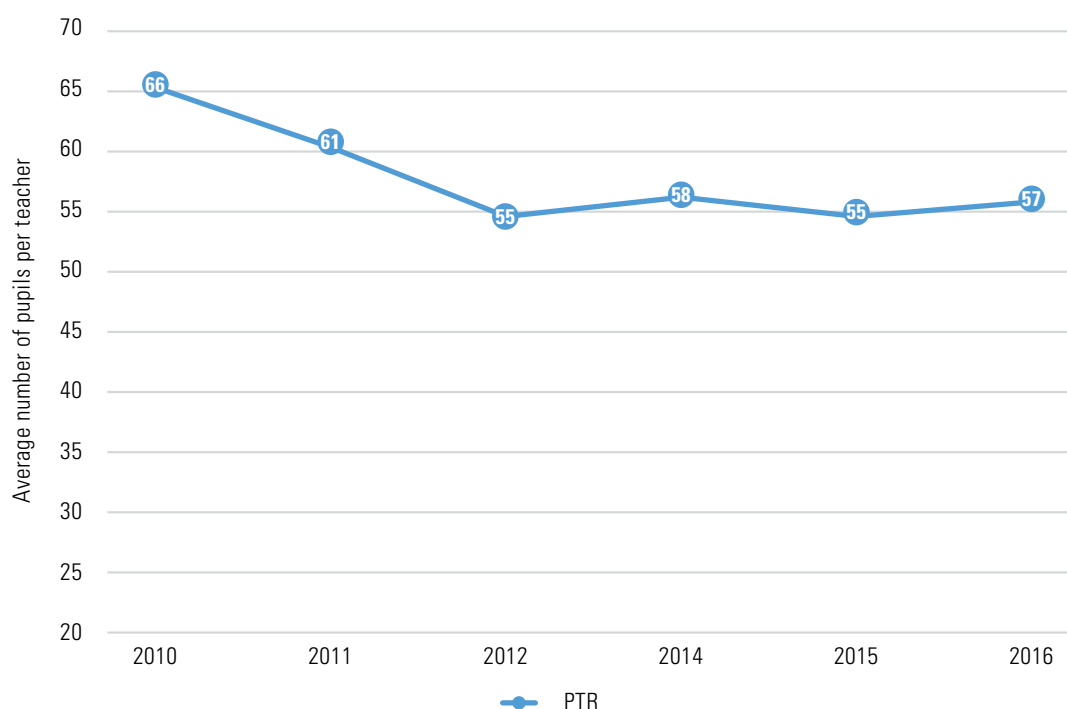
Source: Sierra Leone Annual School Census data 2010–2012, 2014–2016.

(d) Giving priority to districts and regions that have the worst PQTRs in deployment of newly recruited qualified teachers; as well as in transfer and re-assignment of qualified teachers between districts and regions.

(e) Negotiating (with proprietors and teachers' unions) and implementing a transparent points scheme for promoting teachers, that includes incentives for teachers who serve in disadvantaged schools and districts.

(f) Making progress towards the prescribed PQTR a condition for recruitment or posting of new teachers to a school. I.e. reward schools that are short of teachers but refrain from recruiting unqualified teachers.

Two important caveats should be borne in mind in planning a strategy for right-sizing the teaching force. First, there is a problem of double counting of teachers during the annual school census. The ASC for 2014 estimates that 2,460 teachers may have been counted twice; so, as this double counting continues in subsequent years, the total number of teachers in the system may not be as high as reported.

Second, there is a growing number of school-aged children who are not in school. A 2008 study by UNICEF indicated that there were around 300,000 school-age children not enrolled and not attending school. The latest survey estimates that this number has increased to 390,000. In the interest of equity and in support of the right of all children to quality basic education, there are efforts to enroll these out of school children (OOSC) in school. As these efforts become successful more teachers will be needed to facilitate effective and efficient service delivery in schools.

The prospects of resolving the issue of double counting teachers in the annual school census, and of bringing OOSC into schools, would signal that it may be premature to start reducing teacher numbers drastically. However, urgent action is required to reduce the percentage of unqualified teachers in the system, without necessarily reducing total numbers, as an urgent priority.

In the short term and in the interest of equity, the TSC may wish to take steps towards a fairer distribution of PTR and PQTR across the administrative regions. Figure 3.5. indicates that average PTR has shown little variation in each region between 2010 and 2016; but the Western Area has retained considerable advantage with a PTR staying at 25:1. For the other regions during this period PTR in the Northern Region has been constant at 34:1, whilst for the Eastern Province it has improved from 36:1 to 35:1, and for the Southern Province there has also been a similarly small improvement from 34:1 to 33:1.

FIGURE 3.5. Average PTR by administrative region, 2010 and 2016
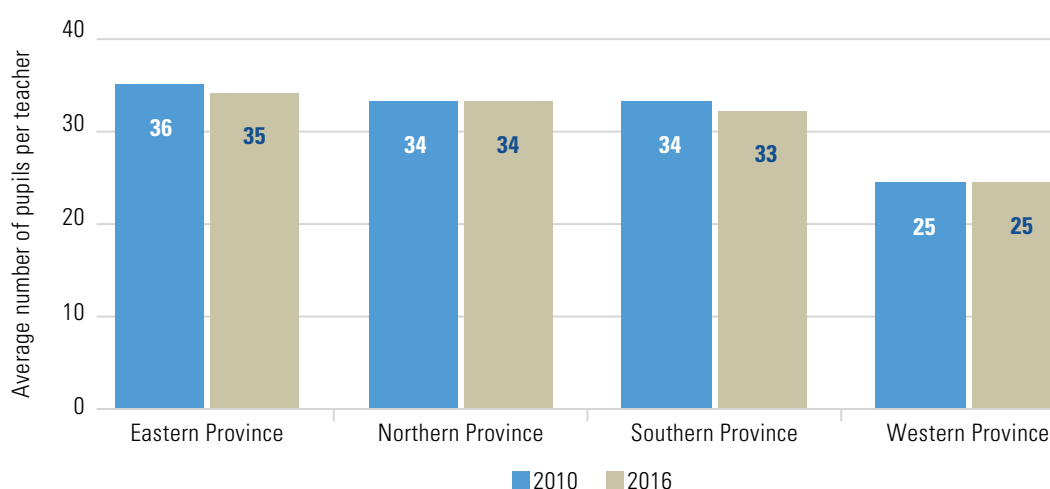
Source: Sierra Leone Annual School Census data 2010 and 2016.

3.2.2. Gender profile of the national teaching force

The gender imbalance in the teaching force is acute, persistent, and retrogressive. It appears to coincide with the spike in teacher recruitment that happened between 2004/5 and 2010/11, when numbers of teachers doubled for primary and increased three-fold for secondary. Prior to this spike gender balance in the teaching force was "normal", and anecdotal evidence suggests that in a climate of high unemployment teaching became a repository of hope for breadwinners (especially males) in many communities.

Whatever the reasons may be for this gender imbalance in the teaching force, it compares poorly with the situation in other countries and regions. Data from the UNESCO Institute of Statistics indicates that Sierra Leone has one of the lowest

percentage of female teachers at primary and secondary school levels. Only 27 per cent of teachers at the primary level in Sierra Leone are female. Figure 3.6 below indicates that the percentage of female teachers at the primary level in Sierra Leone is amongst the lowest in Africa, according to the UNESCO estimates for countries in the Africa region. It is also significantly lower than for Low-Income Countries (World Bank) and for Sub-Saharan countries as classified for the MDGs.

FIGURE 3.6. Percentage of female teachers in primary level
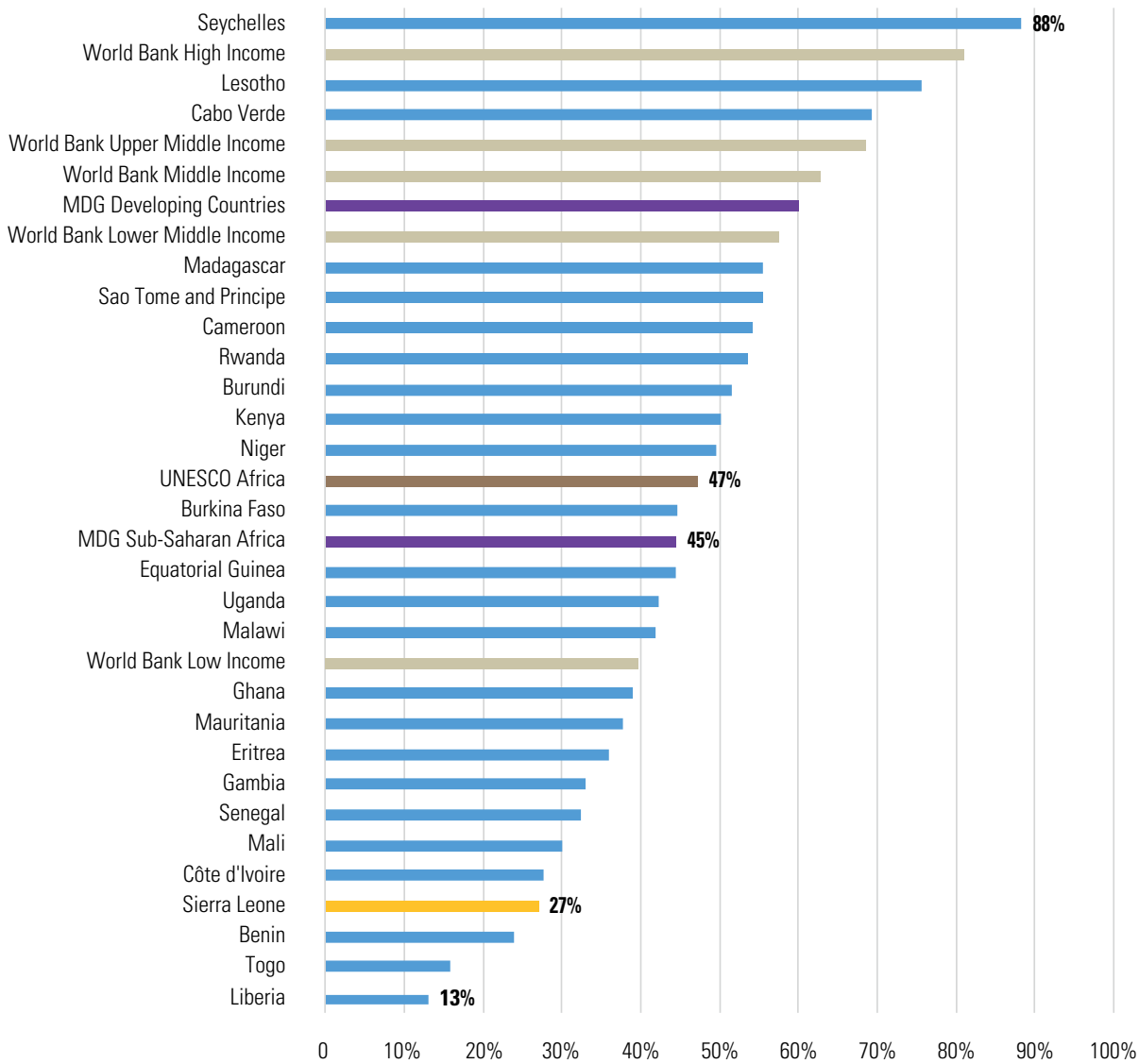
Source: UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2015.

Figure 3.7 gives a similar picture for the secondary level of education. Only 13 per cent of teachers at the secondary level in Sierra Leone are female.

FIGURE 3.7. Percentage of female teachers in secondary level

3.2.3. Experience in the profile of the teaching force

Figure 3.8 gives a profile of the teaching force by years of experience. The force is made up of teachers with limited number of years of experience, since 60 per cent of them have 10 years or less of teaching experience and in fact 34 per cent have only 5 years or less of teaching experience. In contrast, there are only 16 per cent of teachers who have more than 20 years of teaching experience.

However, from 2010 to 2015 the greatest increase has been in the category of 11–20 years of experience, meaning that teachers are staying in the teaching field and the teaching force as a whole has more experienced teachers in 2015 than in 2010.

FIGURE 3.8. Profile of teachers' years of experience, 2010–2016)
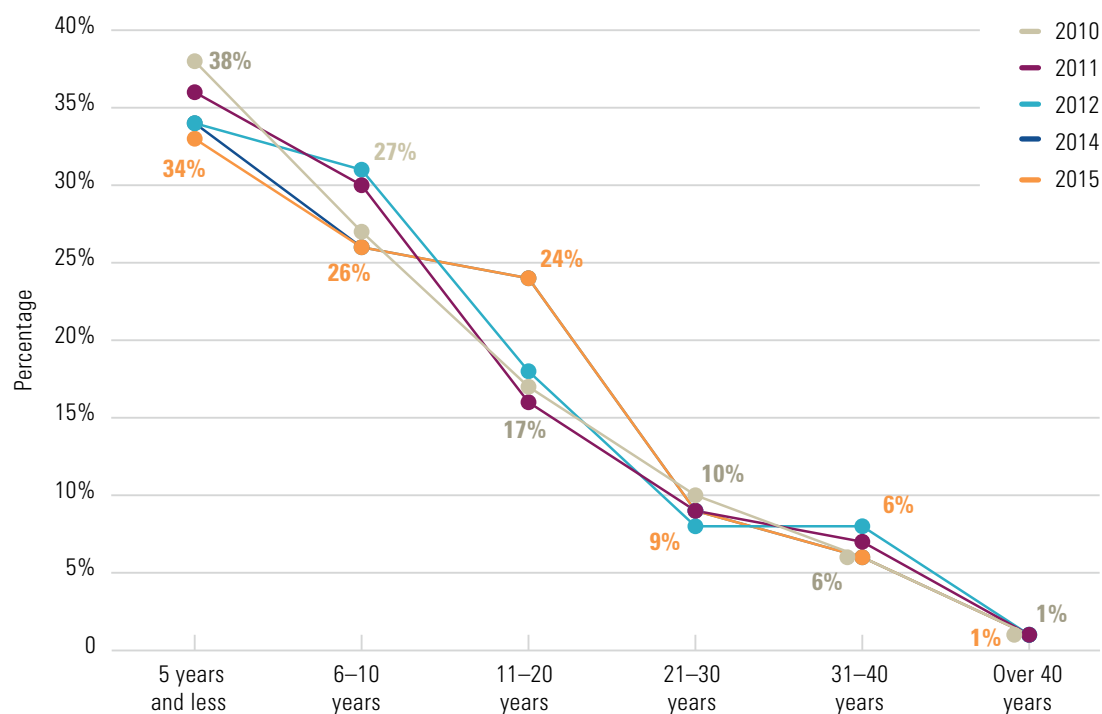
Source: Sierra Leone Annual School Census data 2010–2012, 2014–2016.

3.2.4. Coherence and the national teaching force

Throughout this analysis the term "teaching force" has been used to refer to the total number of teachers in the education system. But thousands of teachers in an education system do not in themselves make up a teaching force; just as any number of players kicking a football around a pitch do not necessarily make up a football team. It is coherence around common purpose and goals; as well as shared ethos, and singular identity that makes these thousands of teachers into a national teaching force. Formal tools of coherence that pull together a diversity of teachers to form a teaching force include: national education policy, national curriculum framework, public exams, standards of practice, code of conduct, ethical guidelines, licensing, and common teacher assessment and promotion criteria. In addition, there are less official elements of coherence such as teachers' unions, subject associations, PTAs/SMCs, and networks or communities of practice.

These elements can help to bind 63,535 teachers in Sierra Leone into a coherent teaching force for the TSC to manage. Teachers should be encouraged to identify with these elements, which give them their professional identity. As part of its mandate, the TSC should help teachers embrace and nurture these elements that are essential for a coherent teaching force. However, this study found that many of these elements are in decline in Sierra Leone. Whilst the teachers' unions are still alive, evidence suggests that there used to be vibrant subject associations as well as other professional communities of practice. One of the challenges for the TSC and partners is to provide incentives and conditions for revitalizing these professional communities of practice.

CHAPTER **4** > # Interventions on numbers and quality

The Teaching Service Commission (TSC) must take account of the different categories of interventions that impact on the numbers of teachers, as well as on the quality of teachers in the teaching force. Although the TSC has a mandate to manage recruitment, not all forms of recruitment fall within its remit. Teacher recruitment is obviously a mechanism available to the TSC for influencing and regulating teacher numbers in the system. However, in a situation where many teachers are not on the Government payroll, and where a high percentage of teachers work in community or private schools, teacher recruitment can take various forms that have become common practice, such as:

- Private proprietors starting a so-called unapproved school may recruit unqualified school leavers as teachers, either to save costs or because they cannot attract qualified teachers.

- Community schools, especially in rural areas, often recruit locals with a specified number of years of schooling as teachers. Around 62.4 per cent of community schools are unapproved.

- Entrepreneurs capitalize on the unmet demand for education in disadvantaged parts of the country by establishing unapproved institutions, serviced by unqualified staff.

- School leavers or college graduates with no training often seek temporary employment, even as "volunteer teachers" (with some remuneration), whilst awaiting opportunities for further studies or employment in their preferred field.

- The rapid expansion of schooling in the country has meant that large scale recruitment of unqualified persons is being used to meet the need for teachers to serve the system.

These are some of the realities of how individuals get to become teachers in Sierra Leone. How they get to be part of the government payroll is another matter! The challenge for the TSC is to regularize and improve on recruitment, thereby influencing the "right-sizing" as well as improving the adequacy and affordability of the teaching force. This will help to produce a steady rise in the percentage of qualified teachers within a teaching force that becomes increasingly adequate and affordable for the nation. Whatever strategy the TSC adopts to accomplish this will

have major implications for investments in the teacher education institutions that determine the numbers and quality of teachers that are ultimately available for recruitment.

This situation analysis has determined that at present there is no coordination between demand for teachers (recruitment) and the supply of qualified teachers (education/training). The strategy that TSC adopts for recruitment should at least send signals to teacher education institutions on enrolment and graduating rates. Without signaling, it is market forces (or students' perceptions) that will shape enrolment rates, and determine graduation and recruitment into the profession.

4.1. Investments in numbers and quality

Another form of investment to influence teacher numbers is in education and training courses. The process through which countries conceive of, organize, and invest in education and training that provides cadres of professional teachers is usually a seamless continuum of lifelong learning. However, it can also be portrayed in the following inter-related stages shown in Figure 4.1.

FIGURE 4.1. **Key components in the making of professional teachers**

Pre-service education

Initial education and training to prepare aspiring teachers (students) for the classroom, as newly-trained teachers

Induction and mentoring

Support/guidance/training provided in the early phase of teaching. This can be system-wide and/or school-specific.

In-service training and CPD

Training scheme to enhance performance of serving teachers and a process of continuous professional development.

4.2. Pre-service education provisions

Sierra Leone has invested heavily in expanding provisions for pre-service education of teachers, but these are not reviewed regularly for relevance and economic viability. An overview of the evolution of these institutions and the types of courses they offer is given in Chart 4.1 below.

CHART 4.1. Pre-service teacher education institutions and courses

Name of institution	Teacher courses, duration and entry requirements
Fourah Bay College, University of Sierra Leone (FBC-USL)	Founded in 1827 by CMS for the training of missionaries and teachers. Became a degree granting institution in 1876 with affiliation to Durham University. A leading institution in the University of Sierra Leone. Offers a Post-Graduate Diploma in Education (Dip. Ed.), as well as Bachelor's & Graduate Degrees in Education.
Njala University (NU)	Set up in 1924 to train teachers; became Njala University College in 1964; constituent college of the university of Sierra Leone in 1972; and a separate university (Njala University) in 2004, under the new University Act. Offers TC, HTC Primary and HTC Secondary courses.
Ernest Bai Koroma University of Science & Technology (EBKUST)	The Northern Polytechnic merged Makeni Teachers' College and Magburaka Technical Training Institute. Northern Polytechnic now merged with Teko Veterinary Institute, Port Loko Teachers College, and an Arabic College in Magburaka, to form EBKUST. Offers TC, HTC Primary and HTC Secondary Courses.
Eastern Polytechnic (EP)	Established under the Polytechnic Act of 2001, from a merger of Bunumbu Teachers' College (1933) and Kenema Technical Institute (1957). Offers TC, HTC Primary and HTC Secondary courses for teachers.
MMCET – Milton Margai College of Education & Technology	Established in 2001; merged Milton Margai College of Education (Milton Margai Teachers' College of 1960); Freetown Technical Institute; and Hotel & Tourism Training Institute. Offers HTC Secondary and B.Ed. courses.
FTC: Freetown Teachers' College	Founded in 1964 by The Anglican Diocese to increase number of trained teachers in primary schools. Offers TC, HTC Primary and HTC Secondary courses, and a distance learning programme for untrained teachers.

4.3. Patterns of enrolment in teacher education courses

Teacher certificates continue to have the highest enrolment of the three certificates. See Figure 4.2 below.

FIGURE 4.2. Teacher certificate programmes for teaching at the pre-primary and primary levels, 2005–2016
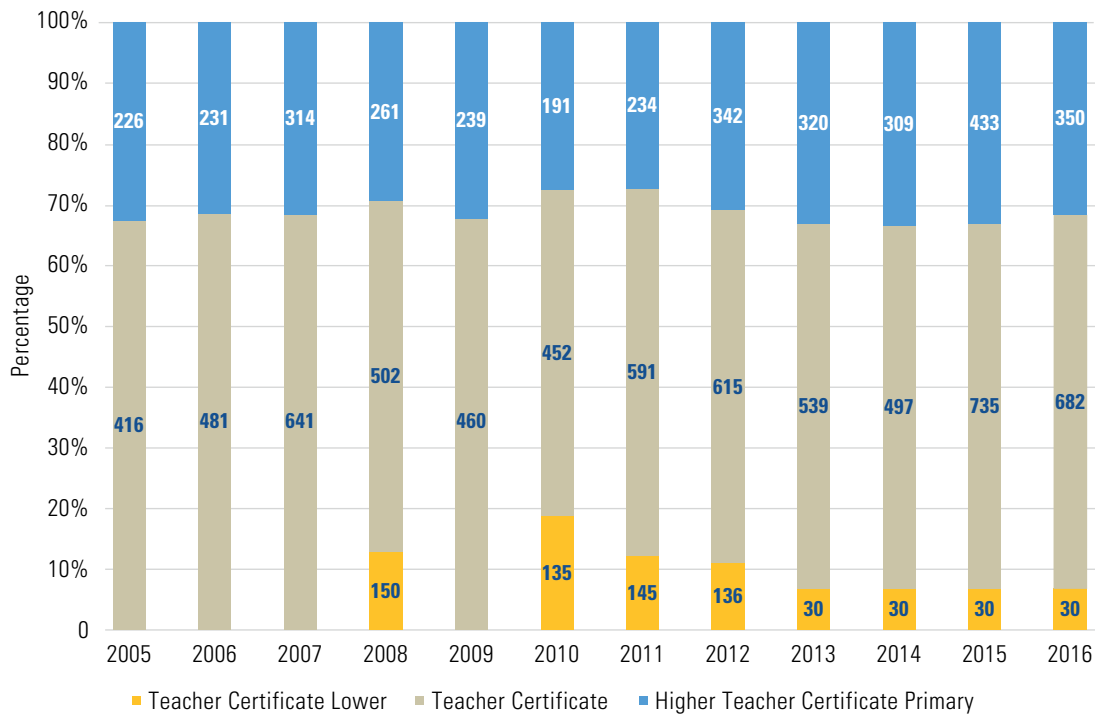
Source: Compiled from data provided for this study by teacher education colleges.

Enrolment in training programmes for teaching at the primary level has increased since 2005. Generally, males are only slightly more likely than females to be enrolled in these programmes. See Figure 4.3 below.

FIGURE 4.3. Enrolment in TCL, TC or HTC (P) in Sierra Leone, by gender, 2005–2016
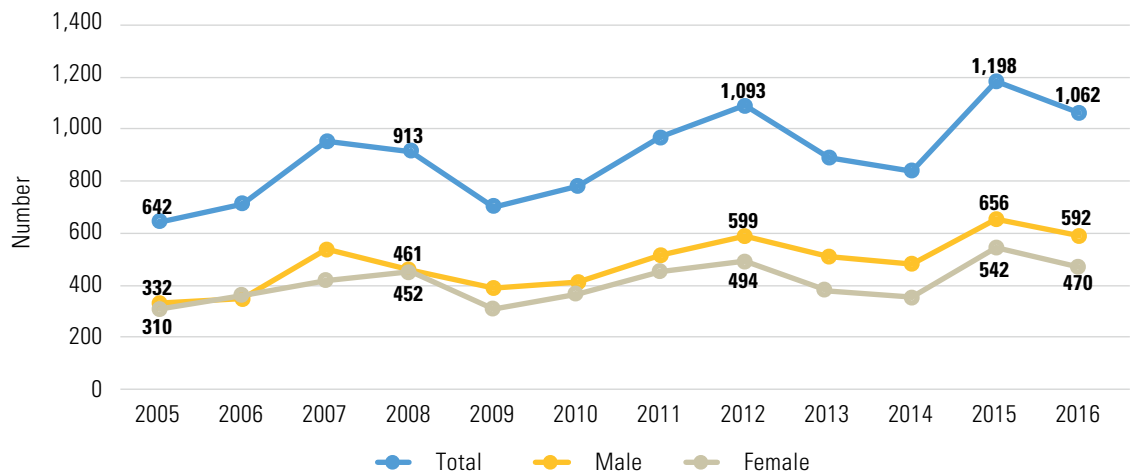
Source: Compiled from data provided for this study by teacher education colleges.

Gender differences in enrolment for HTC Secondary programmes are more significant, with males being enrolled at higher rates than females. The exception to this trend was 2008. In that year, more females were enrolled in HTC programmes than males. Enrolment in 2016 for these programmes was the lowest for the entire period and dropped significantly from the year before. Highest enrolment rates in HTCs were seen in 2012. See Figure 4.4 below.

FIGURE 4.4. Enrolment in HTC secondary programmes in Sierra Leone, by gender, 2005–2016
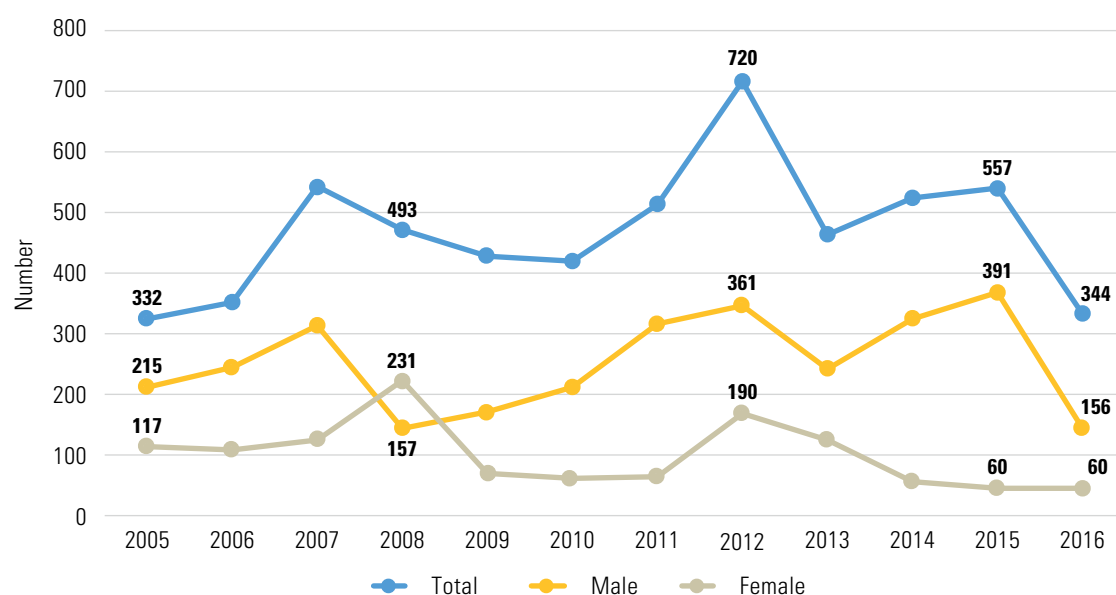
Note: Male and female do not sum to the total because there was no gender disaggregated data for Milton Margai College of Education & Technology (MMCET). There is also no data from MMCET for 2005 and 2006.

Source: Compiled from data provided for this study by teacher education colleges.

4.4. In-service education and training provisions

The most striking aspects of current in-service provisions are that they are chaotic and ad-hoc. There is a multiplicity of providers offering a wide range of training provisions. But there is also minimum coherence, and very little evidence that these provisions have any impact on the career development and classroom practice of teachers, or on student learning achievement. On the other hand, there are positive aspects to the opportunities through which serving teachers can access education and training opportunities. The following are some examples:

(a) Government encourages serving teachers to seek opportunities for career advancement through paid study leave and scholarships. This tends to be mainly for improving formal qualifications, as well as for overseas studies in specialist areas that not catered for locally.

(b) The Teachers' Union in collaboration with the Canadian Teachers' Federation organizes annual in-service training courses for serving teachers.

(c) In recent years, MEST (with support from UNICEF and other EDPs) has introduced training courses for head teachers and School Management Committees (SMCs).

(d) In disadvantaged districts with unapproved community schools, regular in-service teacher training courses are provided by NGOs such as Concern, Plan International, IBIS, CAUSE Canada, IBIS, etc. These NGOs include teacher training in their support packages for the disadvantaged districts in which they operate.

(e) A major and more coherent national effort to provide training for serving teachers was the SABABU project of 2003 to 2008. This focused mainly on improving the competencies of untrained and unqualified teachers, as part of reconstruction after the civil war years.

(f) In response to the Ebola crisis, a national in-service teacher training program focused on protocols for safe schools and infection prevention in schools; as well as on psycho-social support (PSS) to deal with the Ebola aftermath. The training carried out by MEST, UNICEF, WVI and Save the Children covered a total of 28,380 teachers or 44.5 per cent of the total 63,731 teachers working in a total of 8,755 schools across the country.

These examples show a capacity to reach most teachers with training programs executed on a local or national scale, through an impressive number of annual teacher-training workshops. But these workshops do not address problems that teachers face in classrooms. Instead, they tend to replicate pre-service courses, and are designed to upgrade unqualified and untrained teachers. Moreover, little effort has been made to assess the impact of in-service training on classroom performance of teachers or learning achievement of students. Hence, these provisions reflect a deficit model of in-service training that does not explicitly contribute to career advancement or professional development of serving teachers. The focus is rather on compensating for the deficiencies of unqualified and untrained teachers in the school system.

For Sierra Leone to cultivate a quality teaching force, the deficit model of in-service training needs to change. There should be a focus on in-service provision that contributes to the professional development and career development of serving teachers. Such an asset-based model requires in-service training to reflect policies and guidelines on teacher professional development and career advancement. In the absence of policies, strategies, and guidelines, it is difficult to design meaningful in-service training for teachers to advance their careers or for promoting professional development within the teaching force. This is an urgent task that the TSC is now addressing.

Meanwhile, to better understand the current situation, this study tried to assess the prevailing patterns of advancement in the teaching profession. The study asked a sample of "successful teachers" about their initial appointment and subsequent promotion(s) in the education system. Analysis of the responses indicates that in-service education and training do not play an explicit or formal role in the career advancement of serving teachers. Most respondents indicated that promotion in their career was based on obtaining additional formal qualifications, or on length of service in the teaching profession.

4.5. Provisions for continuous professional development

MEST and donor partners have been concerned about major annual expenditures on in-service training workshops without any clear indications of the impact on quality of education. Because of these concerns, MEST and UNICEF are piloting a more school-based approach to continuous professional development of teachers, which is managed at district and regional levels as well as at central/headquarters level. It starts with problems that teachers encounter regularly in their classrooms, and uses these to trigger training/support activities in a cluster of schools where similar problems are reported. Teachers may get support from their peers within the cluster of schools, or from district education officials, or through training provided by teacher education colleges in the district or region. This initiative has already been presented to TSC by UNICEF officials. It now needs to be incorporated into TSC strategies for asset-based in-service training to facilitate teacher professional development and career advancement.

CHAPTER **5**

Teacher supply and demand trends

In managing the teaching force, the Teaching Service Commission (TSC) needs to deal with the dynamics of change in the size and complexity of the force due to patterns of recruitment, retention, depletion, retirement, and upgrading. Trends in teacher supply and demand will help to establish a balance in meeting the needs of schools and the output of teacher colleges. Trends determine if the rate of supply is too high, or too low, or just adequate to meet the demand for teachers. They also indicate changes in the quality of the teaching force; as well as in the equity and efficiency with which teachers are deployed across regions, districts, schools, and different levels of the education system.

5.1. Trends in teacher numbers

Recent trends (Figure 5.1) show that between 2010 and 2016 total number of teachers increased from 57,486 to 63,535; with male teachers being predominant, constituting over 70 per cent of the teaching force over the six years

This pattern of change in teacher numbers suggests that the system may be reaching a saturation point, especially for the primary level where the number of teachers declined between 2010 and 2016, from 38,126 to 37,828 (Figure 5.2). The greatest change during this period is at the senior secondary level, where the number of teachers increased from 4,388 to 7,007. This may be due to the extension of the SSS cycle from three to four years as well as an increase in the number of pupils

making the transition from JSS to SSS. Similarly, the increase in number of teachers at JSS level from 12,806 to 15,122 during this period may be due to a rise in the number of pupils who pass the NPSE examinations and make the transition from primary to junior secondary.

FIGURE 5.1. Trends in number of teachers by gender
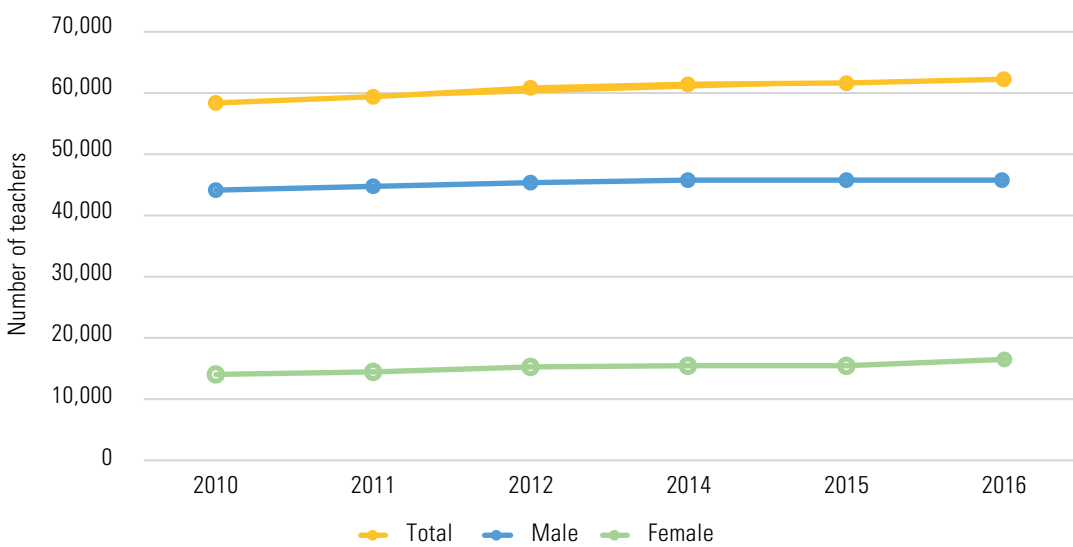
In planning for teacher recruitment, the TSC should consider these trends as possible signals that demand for teachers at the primary level may be slowing down, whereas demand at the junior secondary and senior secondary levels may be on the increase.

FIGURE 5.2. Growth in teacher numbers by level of the education system, 2010 and 2016
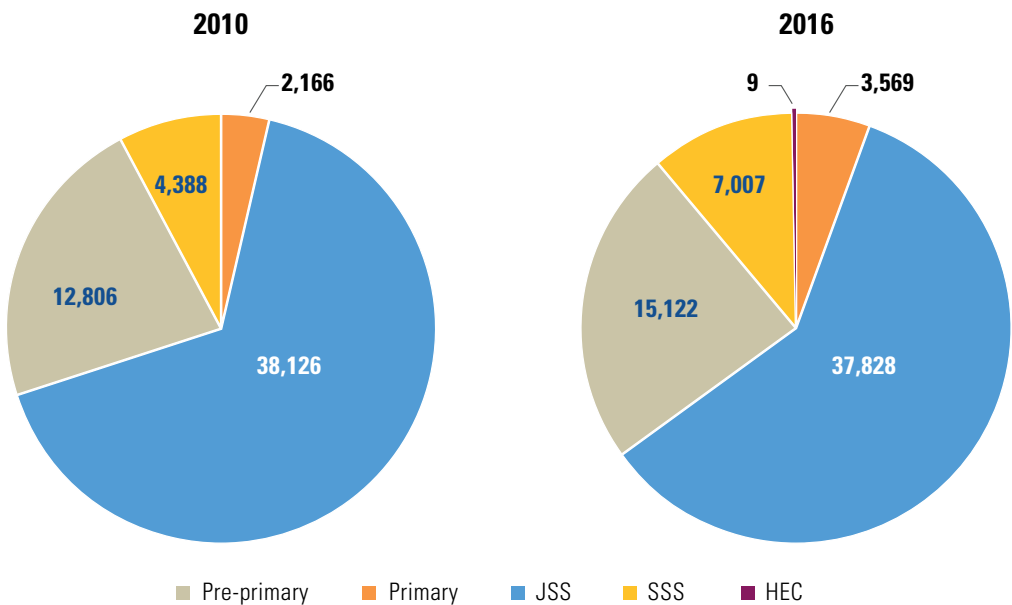
Recent trends in teacher numbers also show that whilst the predominance of male teachers in the teaching force persists, the gap in percentages of male and female teachers is being reduced very slowly. Figure 5.3 indicates that the percentage of male teachers at the primary level fell from 75 per cent in 2010 to 71 per cent in 2016. During this period the percentage of male teachers at the JSS level dropped from 86 to 84 percent; whilst male teachers at the SSS level were 92 per cent in 2010 and 89 per cent in 2016. These reductions in the gap between percentages of male and female teachers are quite small, but they seem to signal a possibility for addressing the gender imbalance in the teaching force in Sierra Leone.

In general, these recent trends in the number of teachers by gender and level do not give a full picture of the dynamic interaction between supply and demand. They do not for instance indicate if, despite small changes in total numbers, there have been high rates of recruitment due to a high attrition rate of teachers in the system. Trends in recruitment of teachers or in attrition rates are required to extract as much meaning as possible from the data on recent trends in number of teachers.

FIGURE 5.3. Trends in per cent of teachers by gender and level of the education system, 2010 and 2016
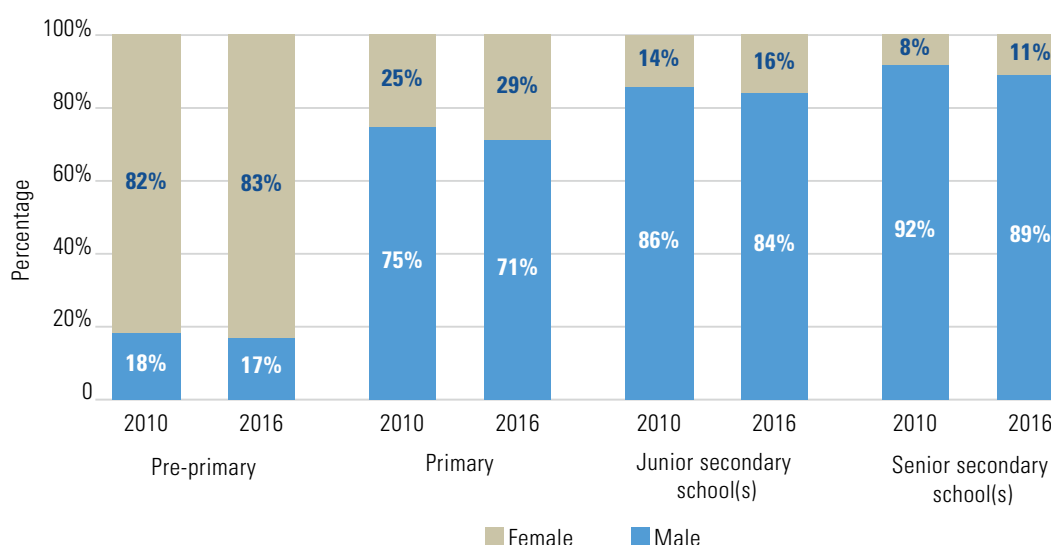
Source: Sierra Leone Annual School Census data 2010 and 2016.

5.2. Trends in teacher recruitment

Despite repeated efforts during this study, it has not been possible to get reliable data from any source on annual recruitment of teachers; either in aggregate or disaggregated form. It has also not been possible to get reliable data on numbers of teachers exiting the teaching force annually. This makes it difficult to capture a sense of the dynamic interaction between supply and demand that determine the size and nature of the teaching force in Sierra Leone. With the advent of the TSC it is hoped that such data can be routinely available and readily accessible to stakeholders.

In the absence of reliable data on annual recruitment and attrition rates, the study used profiles in the number of years of experience of teachers in the teaching force. This is a useful proxy for recruitment and attrition. It indicates whether most teachers are following a normal career path of entering the profession and staying on up to retirement. By examining recent trends in the number of years of experience of teachers in the teaching force, it is possible to gain insight into the dynamic balance between teacher supply and demand in Sierra Leone. Figure 5.4 shows the distribution of teachers by years of experience for the years: 2010, 2011, 2012, 2014, and 2015. The profile of the teaching force by years of experience is similar for each of these years, and the pattern that this profile establishes suggests critical weaknesses in the national teaching force.

FIGURE 5.4. Percentage distribution of teachers by years of experience
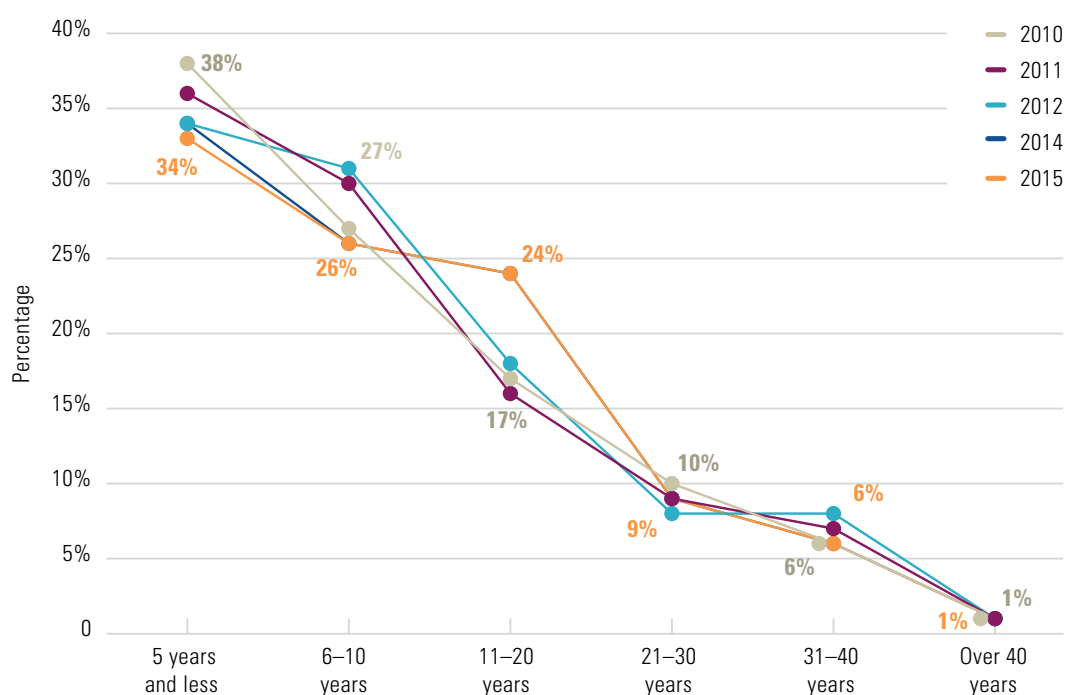
Source: Sierra Leone Annual School Census data 2010–2012, 2014–2016.

The profile of the teaching force by years of experience (Figure 5.4) shows that the force is made up of teachers with limited number of years of experience. In the most recent profile (2015) the data shows that majority of teachers (60 per cent) have 10 years or less of teaching experience, and over half of these (34 per cent of the total) have 5 years or less of teaching experience. In contrast, there are only 16 per cent of teachers in the teaching force who have more than 20 years of teaching experience. This suggests that the national teaching force is highly inexperienced and lacks the seasoned professionals who can become master teachers and mentor new recruits.

More importantly for the TSC, the experience profile of the teaching force indicates that most of those who enter the profession do not stay on to make a lifelong career in teaching. In the case where new recruits enter and stay on to retirement

in teaching as a lifelong career, the profile would follow a normal distribution curve (bell curve) and most of the teachers would be in the mid-range of experience (15 – 25 years). In the case of the national teaching force, the highest number of teachers (34 per cent) are found in the lowest range (0 – 5 years) of teaching experience. It is important to examine this issue further so steps can be taken to arrest and reverse what seems to be a serious attrition problem in the national teaching force.

5.3. Trends in teacher supply

On the supply side the issue for TSC is to gain a sense of trends in the annual output from teacher education institutions for the various courses on offer. Figure 5.5 shows trends for graduation from the various primary teacher education courses by gender for the period 2005 to 2016.

FIGURE 5.5. Trends in graduation from teacher education courses by gender
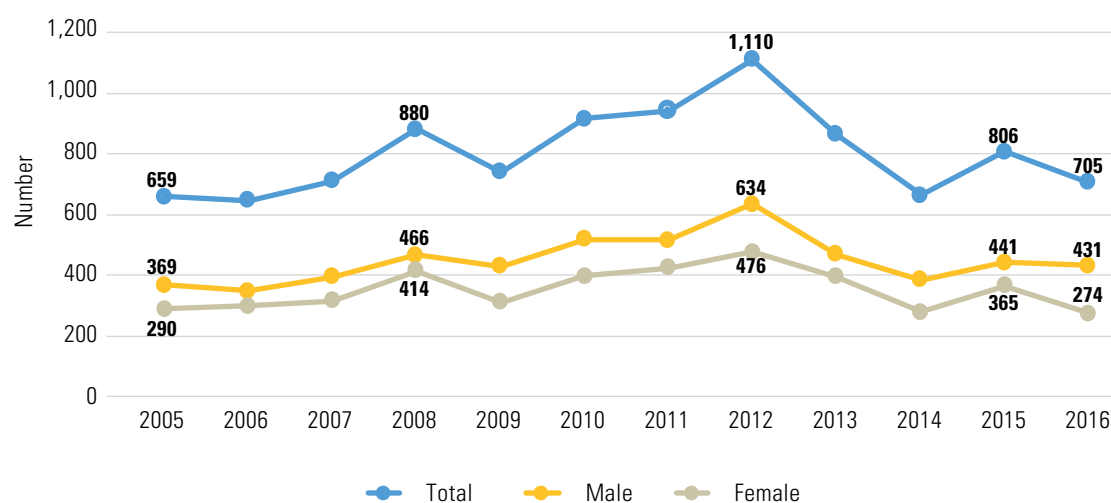
Source: Compiled from data collected for this study from teacher education institutions (except Njala University).

The trend indicates that the total numbers graduating from these primary teacher education courses has fluctuated between 2005 and 2016. The numbers graduating reached a peak of 1,110 in 2012, but has been falling since then, as 705 graduated in 2016, which is only slightly above the number of 659 who graduated in 2005. This raises some serious questions about the costs of an expanding sector of teacher education institutions in relation to the numbers that are graduating from these institutions annually.

Figure 5.5 also shows that number of males graduating from these courses has been consistently higher than the number of females. This feeds into the high predominance of male teachers in the national teaching force. Evidently, if the gender imbalance in the teaching force is to be fully addressed, action would be required to reduce the gap between numbers of males and females graduating from these primary teacher education courses.

A comprehensive situation analysis of teachers and the teaching profession in Sierra Leone

When the graduating numbers are disaggregated into the different primary teacher education courses (Figure 5.6), the data shows that the lowest of these courses (Teachers' Lower Certificate or TLC) is in sharp decline and has graduated only 30 students per year since 2012. This raises questions about the viability of continuing with this course, given the small numbers graduating from it, and its low level compared to other available primary teacher education courses.

At the other end, the numbers graduating from the highest course (HTC- P) has not shown consistent growth. These numbers peaked at 427 in 2012 and have declined since then to 207 in 2016. The Teachers' Certificate (TC) course remains the most consistent of these courses, graduating the highest numbers annually since 2005 and eclipsing the TLC and HTC (P) in 2016. In the light of these trends, this study argues that it may be time for primary teacher education courses to be rationalized and consolidated. TSC should advocate for this as much as possible!

FIGURE 5.6. Trends in graduation from TLC, TC, and HTC (P) courses
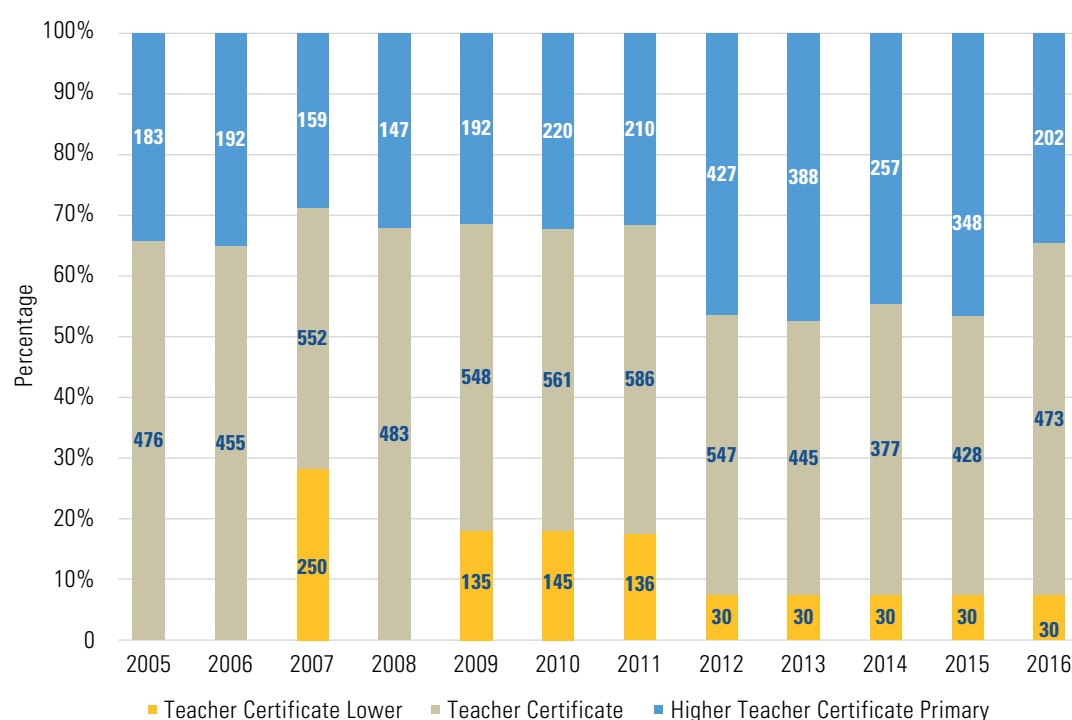
Source: Compiled from data collected for this study from teacher education institutions (except Njala University).

5.4. Trends in teacher quality

In addition to the number of teachers, it is important to take stock of recent trends in the quality of teachers in the teaching force. The main problem, identified earlier in this report, is that there is an unacceptably high percentage of unqualified teachers in the teaching force. Figure 5.7 shows that this percentage (teachers with no qualifications) has been decreasing slowly from 45 per cent in 2010 to 34 per cent in 2016. This decrease in the percentage of unqualified teachers appears

to correspond with increases in the percentage graduating from primary teacher education courses (especially the TC).

However, the percentage of unqualified teachers in the teaching force is not decreasing fast enough to make an impact on the quality of the teaching force. The ESP sets a target of 100 per cent of primary teachers qualified by 2018. But Figure 5.9 shows a slow trend of progress in this area. In 2010 the percentage of unqualified primary teachers was 52 per cent and by 2016 this had declined to 42 per cent of unqualified teachers in primary education. At this rate it would take at least another 20 years to achieve the ESP target of 100 per cent qualified primary teachers.

FIGURE 5.7. Trends in per cent of unqualified teachers in the system

No formal training as educator
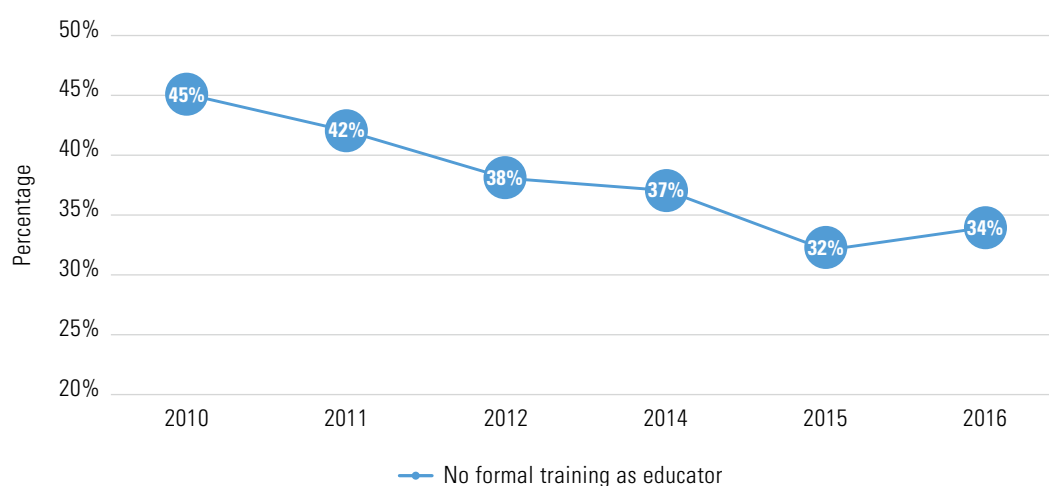
Source: Sierra Leone Annual School Census data 2010–2012, 2014–2016.

FIGURE 5.8. Trends in per cent of teachers by type of qualification

No formal training — Teacher training certificates — BA — MA/PhD — No response/other

Source: Sierra Leone Annual School Census data 2010–2012, 2014–2016.

A comprehensive situation analysis of teachers and the teaching profession in Sierra Leone
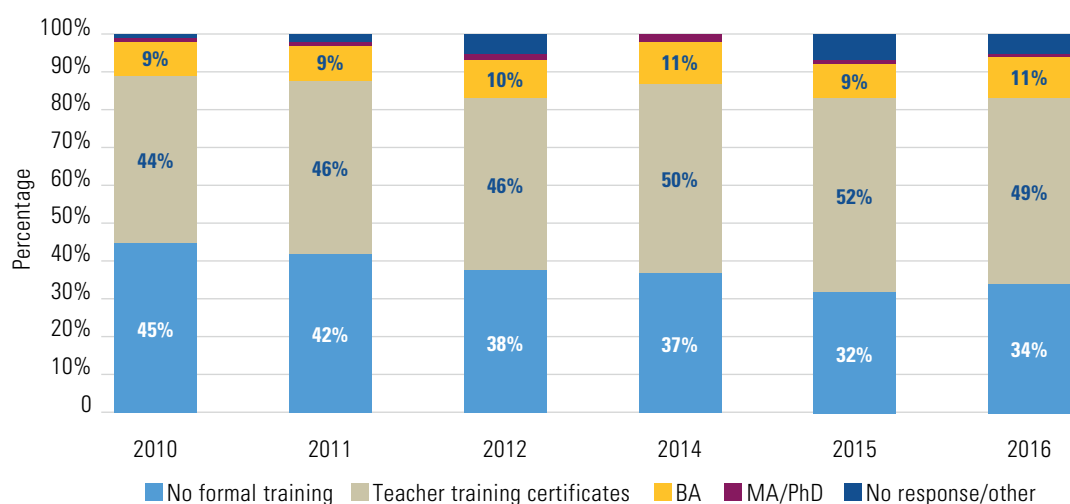
FIGURE 5.9. Trends in per cent of primary level teachers by type of qualification

Bar chart showing percentages by year:

- 2010: No formal training 52%, Qualified 48%
- 2011: No formal training 48%, Qualified 52%
- 2012: No formal training 44%, Qualified 56%
- 2014: No formal training 39%, Qualified 61%
- 2015: No formal training 39%, Qualified 61%
- 2016: No formal training 42%, Qualified 50%

Legend: ■ No formal training ■ Qualified

Source: Sierra Leone Annual School Census data 2010–2012, 2014–2016.

Beyond the primary level, Figure 5.10 indicates good progress with teacher qualification at the level of JSS. In 2010 only 48 per cent of those teaching at JSS level had appropriate qualifications. The rest (52 per cent) either did not have any formal qualifications or had qualifications below what is required to teach at this level. By 2016 the improvements gained resulted in 63 per cent of JSS teachers classified as qualified, whilst 10 per cent had qualifications below requirements, and the rest (27 per cent) did not have any formal qualifications. Figure 5.11 indicates similar improvements in the case of teachers at SSS level. The percentage of qualified SSS teachers improved from 48 per cent in 2010 to 63 per cent in 2016, but there were still 12 per cent unqualified teachers, and the rest had qualifications below the level required.

FIGURE 5.10. Trends in per cent of JSS teachers by type of qualification

Bar chart showing percentages by year:

- 2010*: No formal training 37%, Teaching qualification below level 15%, Qualified 48%
- 2011: No formal training 37%, Teaching qualification below level 16%, Qualified 47%
- 2012: No formal training 34%, Teaching qualification below level 16%, Qualified 50%
- 2014*: No formal training 35%, Teaching qualification below level 34%, Qualified 31%
- 2015: No formal training 26%, Teaching qualification below level 20%, Qualified 54%
- 2016: No formal training 27%, Teaching qualification below level 10%, Qualified 63%

Legend: ■ No formal training ■ Teaching qualification below level ■ Qualified

* Best available data at the time of publication of this study.

Source: Sierra Leone Annual School Census data 2010–2012, 2014–2016.

FIGURE 5.11. Trends in per cent of SSS teachers by type of qualification
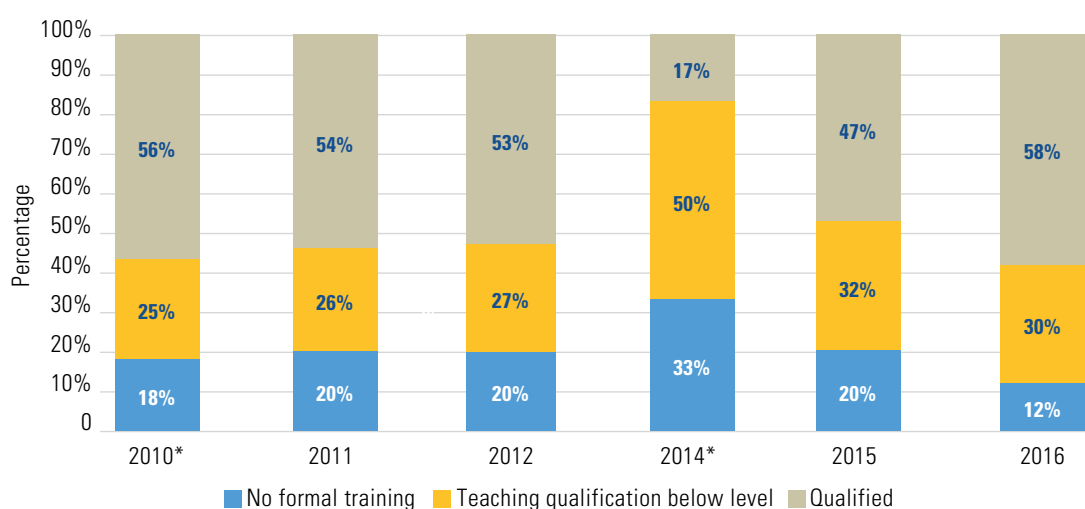
* Best available data at the time of publication of this study.

Source: Sierra Leone Annual School Census data 2010–2012, 2014–2016.

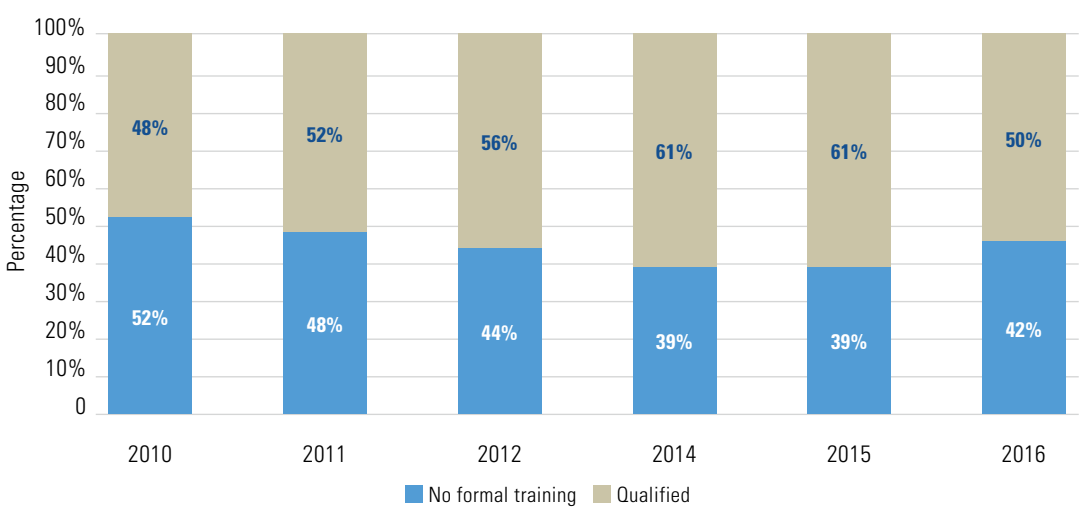These trends give a sense of progress and reassurance that quality of teachers in the teaching force is moving in the right direction. However, the data is somewhat patchy on qualifications with a significant number of qualifications recorded as "unknown". This ties in with anecdotal evidence and concerns about the use of "fake certificates" to secure employment in schools, especially at JSS and SSS levels. The TSC should support efforts by MEST and other authorities to eliminate these practices, especially with measures applied at the district levels.

Apart from formal qualifications as proxy for quality, there are a variety of issues that influence the quality of the national teaching force. These include: attracting strong candidates to teaching as a profession; teacher education courses that develop competencies in subject and pedagogy; management and support that minimizes teacher absenteeism and maximizes teaching time. The TSC should include these issues in its assessment of quality of the teaching force.

Teacher development and management

CHAPTER 6 › Teachers' issues and pre-occupations

The views of a wide range of teachers were canvassed through informal discussions, focus group discussions (FGDs) and open-ended interviews with selected individuals. Most of the issues raised and views expressed were familiar from anecdotes and popular perceptions reported in other studies. These are given in summary outline in this chapter to represent the voice of teachers.

6.1. Overview of key issues and preoccupations

Teachers are most concerned with the idea that their profession is increasingly becoming what some of them describe as a "dead end job". They value the education and training they have and believe they are doing an important job in helping to build the future of the nation, but they do not feel appreciated.

Paraphrasing some teachers who expressed their thoughts, gives an overview of the issues and preoccupations of the teachers encountered in this study:

It is difficult to see a way forward in this profession, unless you can find a way to get further qualifications or maybe go abroad and teach there.

Some of those you teach say they can go on to earn much more money than we can even dream about. They tell you that you cannot afford to own a car and even the way you dress shows teaching is not a profession where there is money.

Sometimes there are parents who appreciate what you are doing for their children, especially when it comes to examination time. But there are also parents who feel they can just give you some money and you should make their children pass the examinations.

There is less respect for teachers than in the days when we were at school. Our teachers did not need to do several jobs to make ends meet, but now we offer private lessons or find additional ways of making money in this economy.

It is mainly about the respect. We are educated, and people should respect that, as well as appreciate what we can do for the young generation of the nation.

A more formal outline of some of these key issues is given in the following sections.

6.1.1. Career pathways for teachers

Teachers believe that in every profession there should be rules about how to make progress, and if one follows those rules and works hard they should be able to advance in their profession. This is becoming less and less the case for teaching as a profession. Whatever criteria exist for moving forward are not clear to most teachers. Even when you get to know the rules, you soon find they are not applied objectively or fairly. Anyway, there can only be so many senior teachers and not everyone can become a school head. In short there are not too many pathways for moving ahead in the teaching profession, so most teachers are stuck and can only look forward to the annual increase in their salaries, which is really very small.

To explore these sorts of musings more formally the study administered a short questionnaire to a small sample of teachers who were successful professionals, having advanced in their career and moved on to senior positions. These successful teachers were asked to outline their progress from first appointment into the profession to their current position as senior professionals. The questionnaire asked them to complete a tabular outline of their progress as follows:

1. What was your First Appointment into the teaching profession?

Year appointed	Position	Entry qualification	Employer

2. Please give details of all your **Promotions** within the teaching profession?

NO:	Year promoted	To what position	Why/how promoted
1st			
2nd			
3rd			
4th			
5th			
6th			

The responses indicated that most of these teachers were initially recruited as Assistant Teacher based on qualifications ranging from GCE "O" levels to HTC (S). On average, and after being confirmed, they got their first promotion (usually to senior teacher) in about 10 years. Some exceptionally got promoted after 2 years, and others were only promoted after 16 years of service. The basis for promotion was generally an additional qualification obtained by the teacher. Following this the next promotion was on average after four to six years, usually to Head of Department, Deputy Head Teacher, or Assistant Principal. Here again promotion was typically based on having additional qualifications. Most of the respondents only had two promotions, but a few had three. They all considered themselves successful as many of their colleagues had no promotion or only one after many years of service in the teaching profession.

6.1.2. Teacher salary scales and conditions of service

The teachers interviewed did not feel that their salaries were too low compared to other professions, but they complained about the economy and cost of living in the country. This made it important to seek additional sources of income to have a reasonable standard of living. Some teachers did appreciate that the total salary bill for teachers was the largest item in the annual budget of the government. But they expressed the view that this was investment in the future of the country, and it was therefore justifiable unlike many wasteful projects and expenditures.

6.1.3. Principles and patterns of teacher recruitment

On the issue of teacher recruitment, teachers were aware of the official criteria and procedures, but also stated that in practice things did not always work according to what is official. The basis for recruitment was variously stated as: "trained and qualified applicant"; "green light from HQ based on a quota system for each district office"; "vacancy exists in the school". Procedure for recruiting included: "advertise in the media"; "screen candidates and set date for interview"; "screen certificates of candidates"; "submit certificates to MEST for verification"; "Forms filled by school head"; "Forms signed by DDs"; "Forms finally sent to HQ for Minister's signature".

Teachers explained that recruitment is usually done annually, but that there is sometimes a ban on recruitment due to "checks and balances". Others assumed recruitment is done only when and how approved by HQ. The business of teacher recruitment should follow basic procedures that are known to many stakeholders in the system. But in practice teacher recruitment seems to have become a "black box" of informal rules, influence peddling, ad-hoc decisions, and much uncertainty.

6.1.4. The practice of teacher management and support

In focus group discussions teachers explained what is involved in the management and support they receive. This involves the school head as well as supervisors, school inspectors, and deputy directors in districts. Activities include supportive supervision, formal inspections, coordination meetings, and in-service training (workshops). Some teachers found these activities useful for their careers but complained about lack of access to the curriculum and teaching syllabus, as well as shortages of teaching/learning materials for their work. Other teachers felt it was better for them to concentrate on providing services required for pupils to pass the public examinations, as this is what was expected by parents and even the school head.

The conclusion from these discussions with teachers is that there is an urgent need for official statements of expectations to guide teachers in their work as professionals. If it is not clear what is expected of them, teachers will have difficulty in performing their roles with a sense of purpose and a reasonable chance of advancement in their profession.

CHAPTER **7** ▷ **Teacher quality and professionalism**

7.1. The quest for teacher quality

In line with common practice as is reported in the national and international literature, this situation analysis has used qualifications as proxy for teacher quality. Qualifications obtained through credible teacher education courses are obviously an important determinant of teacher quality, but this is only part of what constitutes quality, and much depends on perceptions of what is required of teachers as professionals. This is a critical issue for the Teaching Service Commission (TSC), as it needs to set clear expectations for professional teachers in the national teaching force. Based on analysis of current practices and the prevailing situation, this study suggests that there are two main models or schools of thought for the TSC to consider in setting out such expectations.

The first model stresses proficiency in the basics of facilitating learning, which are knowledge of subject matter and pedagogical techniques; i.e. what to teach and how to teach. This model also usually emphasizes understanding of the practical realities shaping the learning environment in schools, through practice teaching stints. The main expectation set for teachers in this model is to facilitate learning and enable pupils to pass examinations. Indeed, examination success is the main determinant of what stakeholders in Sierra Leone perceive as quality schools and teachers.

The second model defines teachers as autonomous professionals, who must make key decisions in a variety of complex learning situations. The expectations are that such teachers need to know not only what to teach and how to teach; but also, why they teach and what outcomes to expect from successful teaching. In addition, they are usually expected to have some sense of the goals of the school, the community, and the nation; especially as these goals relate to education. These teachers are expected to focus not only on learning outcomes or examination results; but also on their role in promoting equity and efficiency in schools, as well as their influence on the development of individuals, communities, and the nation.

This is not just "wishful thinking" in setting expectations for teachers. Sierra Leone once pioneered an innovative teacher education model at Bunumbu Teachers' College. This prepared teachers not only to facilitate learning in schools, but also to serve as animators for rural development.

To assess the current situation on expectations set for teachers, a documents analysis was done for the structure and content of teacher education courses (TC, HTC/P, HTC/S, B.Ed., PGDE) in the various institutions. Many of these courses have been recently revised or are in the process of being revised. The main findings from analysis of these courses can be summarized as follows:

(a) There is a strong and growing emphasis on knowledge of subject matter. Revisions to the courses have added more to this aspect of teacher education, at the expense of pedagogy and practice teaching in schools. Informal discussions with teacher educators suggest that this is (in part) a response to the declining numbers of students interested in teaching as a career. Increased knowledge of subject matter enables students to hedge their career options, as they can go into non-teaching fields with an adequate knowledge base. In fact, some institutions are now offering (or proposing to offer) non-teaching courses, to make up for declining enrolment in their existing teacher education courses.

(b) The time allocated to practice teaching in schools remains minimal, and this aspect does not carry much weight in assessment for successful completion of these courses. The process of graduating from teacher education courses continues to be determined largely by the performance of students in the written examinations taken at the end of each year.

(c) The new *"National Curriculum Framework and Guidelines for Basic Education"* and the accompanying detailed teaching syllabus developed for all basic education subjects have yet to feature in any of the teacher education courses reviewed in this situation analysis. These basic education curriculum documents are the main source of information and guidance on the needs of learners in the schools. If they have not yet been incorporated into teacher education courses, it becomes questionable if graduating teachers are being prepared to meet the needs of learners in the school system.

(d) There is no provision in any of the teacher education courses for follow up guidance and support or assessment of the performance of graduating students in the classroom; as a basis for making changes to improve these courses. The teacher education institutions apparently have nothing more to do with the new teachers, once they graduate from these courses. This can be a recipe for poor quality, with of lack of relevance to the needs of learners, low levels of effectiveness, and poor efficiency in the discharge of duties.

From the limited exercise of documents analysis done on teacher education courses, it can be argued that the implied expectations for teachers is to facilitate examination success for learners through competencies in knowledge of subject and pedagogical techniques. This supports the popular perception that quality schools and teachers are those with the best examination results.

In comparative terms it is widely acknowledged that teachers are critical resources for quality in education. The latest World Development Report (WDR) by the World Bank argues that teachers are the most important factor affecting learning in schools, especially in developing countries. But it also points out many of the challenges involved in realizing the potential contribution of teachers in developing countries. First, it is usually not the best students who aspire to be teachers. Then the teacher education courses often do not do a good job of preparing student teachers properly with subject matter and pedagogy, for the reality of teaching

pupils from different backgrounds in the schools. In addition, the time allocated for teaching and learning is not used efficiently; and teachers are often absent from school or from the classroom even when they are in school.

Based on the international literature and the increasing demands on teachers, the range of competencies required in teachers who are part of a high-quality teaching force can be mapped out as in Figure 7.1. below.

FIGURE 7.1. Essential teacher competencies for a high-quality teaching force
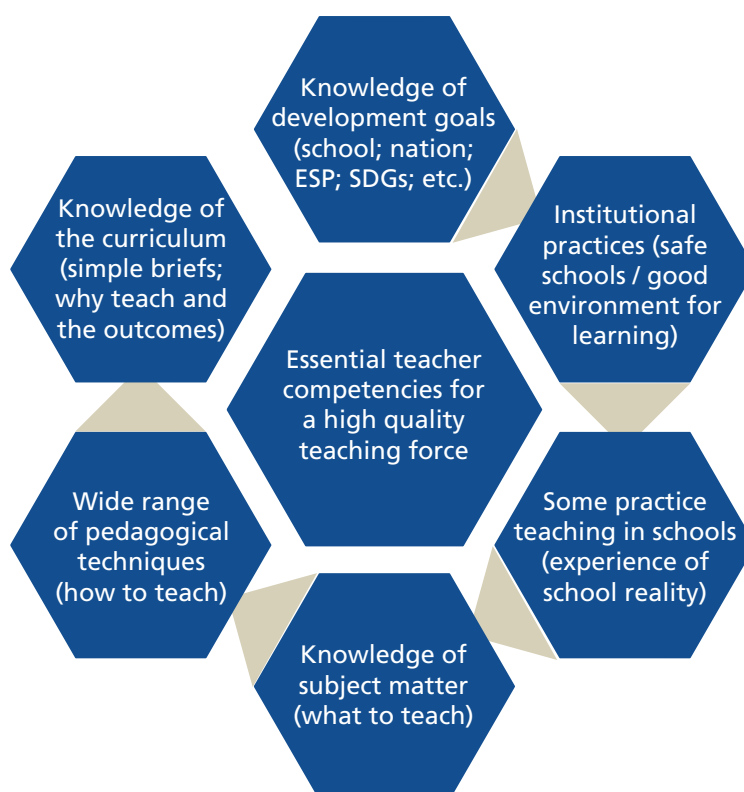
7.2. Assessment of teacher quality

There are various ways of assessing teacher quality, depending on the expectations that are set for the teachers in an education system. As part of its SABER network the World Bank has outlined eight criteria for assessing the quality of a teaching force in any education system. These have been reproduced here as Figure 7.2 below. The TSC can adopt some (or all) of these criteria as it sets expectations for teachers in Sierra Leone and tries to gauge the quality of the teaching force.

From another perspective the quality of teachers can be assessed based on the expectations that currently prevail in the education system. These expectations give priority to good performance of pupils in public tests and examinations as the hallmark of quality teachers and schools.

FIGURE 7.2. SABER criteria for assessing the quality of a teaching force

1. Are there clear expectations for what students should know and be able to do?
2. Are there clear expectations for what teachers are supposed to do?
3. Do teachers have enough time to fulfill their duties?

1. Are entry requirements set up to attract talented candidates?
2. Are pay and benefits appealing for talented candidates?
3. Are working conditions appealing for talented candidates?
4. Are there attractive career opportunities?

1. Are there minimum standards for pre-service teaching training programmes?
2. Are individuals required to have classroom experience to be allowed to teach?
3. Do teachers have a smooth transition from pre-service training into their first job?

1. Are there minimum mechanisms to hold teachers accountable?
2. Are there rewards for high performing teachers?
3. Are there sanctions for low-performing teachers?

1. Is teacher performance data used to improve teaching?
2. Is there professional development to improve practice?

1. Are there incentives for teachers to work at hard-to-staff schools?
2. Are there incentives for teachers to teach critical shortage subjects?

1. Is there enough student achievement data to inform teaching?
2. Is there enough teacher performance data to inform teaching?

1. Are requirements to become a principal set up to attract talented candidates?
2. Do principals have incentives to perform well?
3. Can principals make key decisions to improve teaching?

1. Setting clear expectations for teachers
2. Attracting the best into teaching
3. Preparing teachers with useful training and experience
4. Matching teachers' skills with students' needs
5. Leading teachers with strong principles
6. Monitoring teaching and learning
7. Supporting teachers to improve instruction
8. Motivating teachers to perform

Effective teachers

Recent performance of pupils in various public examinations and tests suggest that the quality of teachers in Sierra Leone is not good. At primary level, pupils in class 2 and class 4 performed very poorly in assessments of their reading and mathematics ability. It was concluded that these pupils did not have the ability to decode words. They were learning through rote memorization and by repeating text in chorus, rather than learning to read. Similarly, these pupils could not do addition and subtraction with automaticity, but relied on counting tick marks in doing these operations. They also performed badly on tests involving double-digit and triple-digit numbers because they did not know numeric place values.

At the other extreme, students taking WASSCE at the end of senior secondary school consistently performed poorly over several years in all key subjects. These are the students who have passed through primary and junior secondary successfully, yet less than 30 per cent of them could score pass marks in the key subjects at this public examination. See Figure 7.3 and Figure 7.4.

FIGURE 7.3. Western Area students' performance at final school examinations (WASSCE)
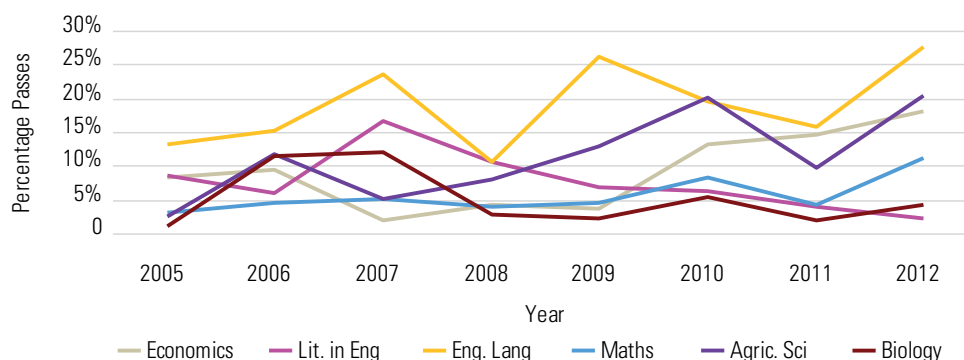
Source: West African Examinations Council (WAEC) Sierra Leone Office.

FIGURE 7.4. Eastern Region students' performance at final school examinations (WASSCE)
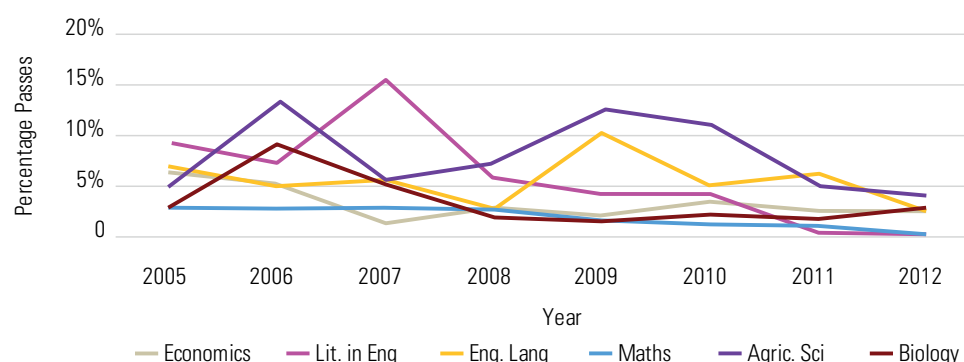
Source: West African Examinations Council (WAEC) Sierra Leone Office.

7.3. A quality-oriented teaching force

Thousands of teachers in an education system do not in themselves make up a teaching force. It is their coherence around common purpose and goals; as well as their shared ethos, and singular identity that makes these thousands of teachers into a national teaching force. The teachers will share a common commitment to achieving the goals and objectives of a national curriculum, or they may (as practitioners), adhere to the ethics and values inherent in the role of teacher. Much will depend on the existence and strength of various bodies such as the Teachers' Unions, Subject Associations, Communities of Practice, and Social Groups that help to give coherence and bind teachers into an entity that can be called a national teaching force.

Much also depends on how far individuals associate with these bodies and use them to self-identify as "teachers". There are also issues of how well these bodies provide a genuine bond and a sense of community; as well as how much they offer in space for growth and exchange of views on professional matters.

Drawing on the international literature and the requirements for a high-quality teaching force, the essential elements of coherence required to hold 63,535 teachers together into an adequate and affordable teaching force in Sierra Leone, can be mapped out as in Figure 7.4.

FIGURE 7.5. Essential elements of coherence for a high-quality teaching force
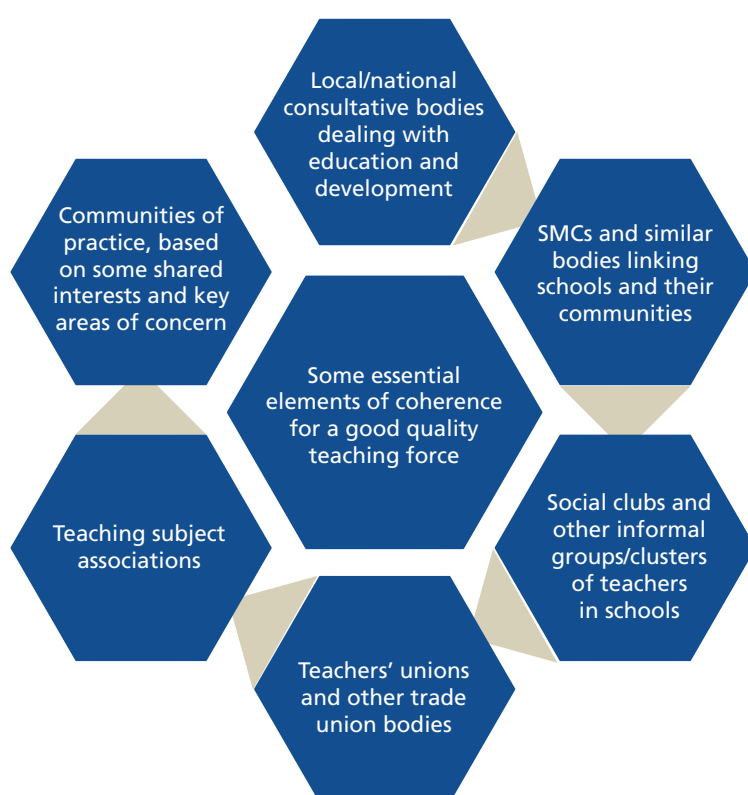
7.4. Setting expectations for teachers as professionals

Teachers need to know what is expected of them as professionals and how they will be assessed during their careers. Presently the focus is on competency in subject knowledge and pedagogy, as required to get pupils to perform well in examinations. But there are still concerns with issues of honesty, integrity and building character in young people. Then there are also expectations that teachers should contribute to the goals set for their schools, communities, and nation. The TSC must make clear what is the range of expectations that it holds for teachers in Sierra Leone.

CHAPTER **8** > # Governance and management

8.1. Public-sector reform and teacher governance

A major challenge for governance and management of the teaching force is that decentralization has not worked as intended. This policy, enacted in 2004, was expected to improve delivery of services and increase accountability of institutions and their staff to the communities they serve. It provides for transfer of responsibilities for basic education from central government to local councils, but this has been hampered by lack of capacity at local level. In practice accountability still gravitates to the central level (MEST – HQ) rather than to local councils. This weakness in the implementation of decentralization has made it difficult to address problems of disparities in PTR and PQTR between districts and for schools within districts.

Discussions with knowledgeable officials confirm that appropriate guidelines or procedures have not been put in place to facilitate progress towards a more equitable distribution of teachers in line with local requirements. Indeed, recruitment, deployment, and management of teachers has continued to be decided at the central level of the Ministry of Education, Science, and Technology (MEST), even though these processes may be initiated at the local level. In executing these processes, MEST headquarters has appeared to be more concerned with curbing "ghost teachers" and other malpractices, than rectifying disparities or gender imbalances in the system.

Similarly, failure to implement decentralization effectively as a public-sector reform policy has made it difficult to address the challenges facing unapproved schools and the teachers who work in such schools. An estimated 32 per cent of all schools (including 62 per cent of community schools) are unapproved and so do not receive per capita subsidies or teachers' salaries from the government. Here again, in dealing with the vexed issue of school approval, the priority of central ministry has been to deter the proliferation of "exploitative private/community schools", that are allegedly set up mainly to secure financing from central government.

Weak capacity at the local level has meant that implementation of policies and strategic activities are controlled from the central ministry level. The tools of centralized governance are still very much in place, despite the rhetoric of decentralization. So, institutional oversight, teacher support, performance monitoring, and programme evaluation continue to rely on expertise and resources of the central ministry. Most of these activities are under the purview of MEST Deputy Directors of the Inspectorate Directorate. But these officials are accountable to the central ministry and often see their role as implementing the plans of central ministry and reporting on school performance.

There are some positive developments on capacity building at the local level. For instance, partners have supported the setting up and training of Boards of Governors, School Management Committees, Mothers' Clubs, and similar local level entities to improve education service delivery and accountability. But much remains to be done to build the capacity of local districts to manage education service delivery in line with national policies and guidelines.

It is imperative for the TSC to implement decentralization as a reform policy, if it is to succeed in executing its mandate to: manage teachers, cultivate an adequate and affordable teaching force, and reform the teaching profession.

To this end this study recommends that strategic interventions affecting teachers and schools must be executed at school and district levels, through the newly-established TSC district offices. These TSC district offices will work with schools on teacher recruitment, retention, promotion, and retirement; in line with a transparent strategy for cultivating a right-sized teaching force that is adequate and affordable. Their roles could be linked to *school improvement plans* now being piloted under a World Bank project, and would include:

- Work with schools in their district to review teacher recruitment needs/plans, and set priorities based on established PTR/PQTR standards and clear criteria for adequacy and affordability of staffing in schools/districts (including enhanced teacher work load).

- Work with schools and teacher colleges to review "supply and demand" strategies for reducing gender disparity in the staffing for schools in the district.

- Support planning and execution of in-service training for teachers in the district, through provision of supplementary materials on the curriculum, learning environment, and other areas of competence that enrich basic performance in what to teach and how to teach.

- Assist schools to provide accurate and reliable data to district councils, Situation Room, and education planners on: teacher numbers, qualifications, workloads gender balance, years of experience, and other variables that can be part of a TSC data base on teachers.

- Popularize and share information with schools, teachers, and local officials on regulations, procedures, and criteria for teacher recruitment, retention, promotion, and retirement; to promote transparency and establish trust between TSC and local officials.

- Assist unapproved schools in the district to prepare their school plans and applications for MEST to make timely decisions on approval of the school.

- Provide guidance, share information, and develop resource materials with NGOs/PVOs that support community schools and private schools in the district.

A key implication of this focus on district level work is that TSC should establish an effective and transparent mechanism to make decentralization a reality in its operations. This would require designating a coordinator or focal point within the office of the TSC Chair, to be responsible for liaising with TSC district offices, processing their requests, channeling key decisions and planned activities to them, and ensuring their inputs to the TSC decision-making processes on behalf of their districts. TSC district offices should also collaborate closely with the MEST Inspectorate (DDs) in the districts to put into practice the following policies and strategies affecting teachers:

CHART 8.1. Policies and strategies on governance and management of teachers

Name of policy and strategy document	Brief description and implications
The 1991 Constitution	Identifies education as instrument for national development. It commits Government to equal rights in providing education opportunities for all citizens at all levels (primary, secondary, vocational, colleges, universities). It requires Government to develop policies for free and compulsory basic education at primary and junior secondary levels as and when practical.
The Tertiary Education Commission Act of 2001	Designed to develop the tertiary education sub-sector in Sierra Leone and to advise Government on tertiary education issues.
The Polytechnic Act of 2001	Established polytechnics in Sierra Leone and provided for the management and supervision of polytechnic institutions.
The Education Act of 2004	States that "every citizen of Sierra Leone shall have the right to basic education", and makes it compulsory for all parents to send their children to primary and junior secondary school. It provides a legal basis for the 6-3-3-4 structure introduced in the 1995 Education Policy. Sets goal of enabling citizens to understand the complexities and opportunities of the modern world. Emphasizes education of the whole child (not just the cognitive dimension). Also provides for local governing bodies (School Boards and School Management Committees)
The Local Government Act of 2004	Provides for the transfer of management and supervision responsibilities of basic education, from central government to local government.
The Universities Act of 2005	Re-constituted the University of Sierra Leone, and established Njala University and other public universities.
The Child Rights Act of 2007	This makes education rights binding in the laws of Sierra Leone to carry out commitments on United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), as well as the African Charter on the rights and welfare of the child.
The Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper of 2008	Building on the Agenda for Change, it laid the foundation for the journey to sustainable development. Highlights role of education and human resources.
The Teaching Service Commission Act	Designed to manage the affairs of teachers and reform the teaching service, as well as to improve the professionalism of the teaching force in Sierra Leone.

Name of policy and strategy document	Brief description and implications
National Education Policy of 2010	Outlines goal of education as "to develop citizens that can contribute to building cohesive, healthy, and strong nation; with a sustainable and dynamic economy, a free, just and peace-loving society, and a moral and disciplined society."
The Gov't White Paper on Education of 2010	Provides for reduction in class size, performance contracts for school heads, and library facilities in every school; amongst other quality improvement measures,
The Education Sector Plan (ESP)for 2014–2018 "Learning to Succeed"	Designed to enhance education in Sierra Leone by improving access, quality, and systems management; as well as monitoring progress with standards established as targets for education achievement.
The new 2016 Curriculum Framework & Guidelines for Basic Education	Outlines goals, objectives, guiding principles, approach, priorities, structure, and governance mechanisms for 9-year cycle of basic education. It highlights issues of: equity and inclusion; assessment and accountability; quality and integrity; social cohesion and diversity; and partnership roles; in the education system.
2017 –Updated ESP	Revisits and adjusts standards and targets established for the education system
2017 – The Professional Standards for Teachers and School Leaders	Sets out expectations and provides guidelines on standards of performance as well as professional code of conduct for all teachers and school leaders in Sierra Leone.

8.2. Teacher management and support

At the national level the most important obstacle to teacher management is the lack of data and proper records. For instance, during this study it was impossible to obtain simple aggregate data on total number of teachers recruited annually. If there are anomalies in the teacher data due to double-counting during the school census or "ghost teachers" in the system, then management of teachers will be greatly constrained by poor quality baseline data. The introduction of a "Situation Room" with support from UNICEF has great potential for rapid and real-time monitoring of various aspects of school operations. Some of the monthly data being collected by the "Situation Room" concerns the TSC and this is shared on a regular basis by MEST.

Much will depend on how accurate and reliable this data proves to be, so TSC should have in place its own mechanisms to complement or validate such data from time to time. This could be a simple matter of TSC district officials doing unannounced checks on teacher attendance for some schools in their districts, to help establish numbers for teacher absenteeism in each district as is currently measured by the situation room.

Allied to the issue of data is the challenge of not having rules and regulations in place, and the effective tools to monitor progress at the local level. In focus group discussions, teachers claimed that rules and regulations existed on paper but do not

really govern practices in the education system. This highlights the problem of weak governance in education and is a recipe for chaos and deteriorating performance standards. The TSC has now taken a major step in addressing this problem through the recent development and launch of the ***professional standards for teachers and school leaders***. In comparative terms it is worth noting that this problem is not unique to the Sierra Leone education system. The 2017 Global Education Monitoring (GEM) Report states that this lack of adherence to rules, regulations and standards is a prevalent challenge in the school systems of developing countries. It points out that:

"The reality, we found, is that regulations are not being created or streamlined to adjust to the fast rate with which education systems are expanding. The very first step of accrediting schools in the first place is often cumbersome, prone to corruption, and therefore slow, leaving many operating without meeting even minimum safety and infrastructure standards. In 2010/11 in the capital city of Nigeria, Lagos, for example, only 26 per cent of private schools were approved by the Ministry of Education."

Furthermore, development experts reviewing the report argue that what it shows is that:
"……. governments must establish standards and regulations that lay down the law for all education providers, public and private. If they do not, negative practices quickly take hold."

A third factor affecting teacher management is the tendency of some teachers to "game" the system. Major efforts and resources have been expended to address "ghost teachers". This affects the salary budget adversely and cleaning the payroll has become a top priority for the Government and donor partners. Previous efforts to clean the payroll have not resulted in such "ghost teachers" being removed, but there is some optimism about the latest effort. This will require political will but would result in a clean payroll being available for the TSC to work with. In addition to "ghost teachers" there is anecdotal evidence of teachers who secure recruitment based on false certificates. MEST has been involved at the highest level in trying to root out this practice, and this is one of the factors slowing down the process of teacher recruitment. Then there is the issue of teachers earning multiple salaries by working in different schools, or taking other jobs outside teaching, which usually results in sub-par performance in the classroom.

Fourthly, it is widely reported that there is an inexorable push towards monetizing education on the part of some schools and teachers. In focus-group discussions, pupils and parents complained about charges levied by schools and sometimes by individual teachers for all sorts of services. These may be extra lessons, especially for those taking public examinations; but it could also include "sale" of notes for passing examinations and more spurious matters. The challenge is to curb this type of practice without jeopardizing what may be legitimate business transactions. In some cases, these charges are a matter of survival for the schools concerned; so, advocacy and persuasion may be just as effective as efforts to impose law enforcement measures.

A fifth factor constraining teacher management and support is the difficulty of deploying teachers to schools and districts that are most in need, as part of the process of ensuring an equitable and fair deployment of the national teaching force. The difficult conditions and family life issues that blight disadvantaged communities make many teachers unwilling to work in rural schools or to live and work in deprived communities. It may be necessary for TSC to propose a "points scheme" for promotion of teachers and award of salary bonuses. This should include points for teachers who serve in disadvantaged schools and districts for specific periods, as well as for those who add value to the performance of pupils in public examinations. Such incentives should work well in a system where there are few clear criteria for promotion or bonus pay.

Another factor that works against teacher management and support is the widely reported issue of systemic corruption. This tends to be the most frustrating issue raised by teachers, parents, and other stakeholders when the issue of education reform is discussed in focus groups. There is considerable anecdotal evidence and copious examples of corrupt practices that work against efforts to promote education reform. Again, this challenge is not unique to Sierra Leone, and many African countries are grappling with the same issues. The 2017 GEM Report highlights the problem and its consequences in the following terms:

"Corruption, of course, distorts government resource allocation decisions. Yet in half of countries with data in sub-Saharan Africa, for instance, at least three in five people believe that their education system is corrupt or extremely corrupt. Clear rules and regulations, codes of ethics for public officials, and a commitment to transparency can play important roles in preventing fraud. However, these must be accompanied by stronger management capacity, adequate monitoring, including strong and independent audits, open information systems, and an open environment for media scrutiny. Finally, when corruption is uncovered, the role of the police and courts is crucial in following up and enforcing the law."

Perhaps the most critical constraint in teacher management and support is the challenge of the teacher payroll. This is not really about "ghost teachers", although that is an important concern. It is about dealing with the worst kept secret in the system; that Government cannot afford to pay all its teachers! Many schools and teachers therefore embark on self-sufficient initiatives and may not be keen on being "managed" by the TSC or anyone else!

In these circumstances the TSC should seek to make a constructive contribution to addressing the payroll problem. One way in which it can help is through advocacy for negotiations between Government and development partners to work out a *temporary budget support* scheme. This would be designed to enable the nation to establish a new and right-sized teaching force that is adequate for the system and can be financed within the national budget (i.e. affordable). Such a scheme could include an element of burden sharing with proprietors, who may be willing to pay part of the teacher salary bill.

Teacher costs and affordability

9.1. Structure and patterns of teacher remuneration

This situation analysis does not deal with salary structures and wage differentials of teachers, but looks at three elements that are essential for TSC to consider in managing teachers and reforming the teaching profession. First there is the issue of the size of the teaching force that is adequate for Sierra Leone. The second element is the quality of teachers and the teaching force that will be fit-for-purpose in the education system. Thirdly, there is the issue of what the nation can afford to pay its teachers based on its current and projected annual budget envelope. These elements have a tight inter-relationship in determining levels of remuneration for teachers.

This study has argued (with some caveats) that the current size of the national teaching force in Sierra Leone is surplus to the requirements of the system because it yields an over-generous PTR. It is also highly unaffordable as the largest item in the annual budget and one that causes a strain on the budget, even though as a teacher payroll it does not include teachers working in so-called unapproved schools (34 per cent of all schools). There is a possibility the size of the teaching force can be reduced by eliminating "ghost teachers" and rectifying double-counting anomalies. But this does not alter the fundamental point that the size of the teaching force is unaffordable in the current budgetary circumstances. A reduced teaching force does raise the possibility of more money per teacher in the budget, but then there is the need to bring in those teachers currently excluded from the teaching force. So, a reduced teaching force and the same payroll budget means either same level of salaries but bringing in more teachers from the cold; or increasing teacher salaries and keeping the excluded teachers out in the cold. It is also possible to argue for paying teachers less and bringing in more teachers using the same payroll budget.

The teaching force currently has a high percentage of unqualified teachers and the focus must be on reducing the number of unqualified teachers in the force. The options are to remove unqualified teachers and end up with a smaller teaching force that has a higher percentage of qualified teachers; or replace unqualified teachers with qualified ones and end up with a same size teaching force that has a higher percentage of qualified teachers. Both options could mean higher costs since qualified teachers cost more than unqualified ones.

In general, the strategy adopted by TSC to right-size the teaching force and improve its quality will have major implications for teacher costs, so careful thought should be given by MEST and TSC to the structure and pattern of teacher remuneration. If the choice is for a better qualified and better paid teaching force, then it can be done with an increased workload for teachers in a teaching force that yields a

higher PQTR. On the other hand, it may be possible to select teachers with minimal training (subject, pedagogy, and lesson plan), who can be paid less but expected to do an effective job of getting pupils to pass examinations.

These are some of the options to consider when trying to balance the adequacy and quality of the teaching force with affordability. But what would matter most to teachers is their individual pay and how their salary scale compares with those of other professionals who have a similar level of education and training. Teachers have benefited from recent public-sector salary increases, and they receive comparable salaries to tertiary-educated workers in competing professions.

For comparison with the international situation, a recent OECD survey concluded that:

"In most countries actual teachers' salaries lose out against those of competing professions".

It also found that

"On average across OECD countries, primary teachers are paid 81 per cent of the earnings of other tertiary-educated professional."

This percentage is 85 per cent for lower secondary teachers and 89 per cent for upper secondary teachers. Similar comparisons should be made for the Sierra Leone salary situation to ensure that teachers do not trail other tertiary-educated professionals in the quest for fair remuneration. As the OECD report puts it:

"Governments should not expect that prospective and current teachers will remain content with just the intangible incentives and rewards that traditionally come with teaching. Like every other professional, teachers deserve to be paid a salary that is commensurate with their training and experience. The war for talent is also fought with money."

9.2. The teacher salary bill in context

This study has argued that there is an untenable budget situation with a teacher payroll that is much too high already whilst it does not even include a substantial number of teachers working in the system. The pretext that the schools in which such teachers work are unapproved cannot go on forever. Similarly, it is wrong to imagine that cleaning "ghost teachers" out of the payroll will remedy this financial impasse. In the present context there are several practical steps that the TSC may wish to advocate for, with the Government and with development partner agencies.

First, the teaching force needs to be made as "lean and mean" as possible to ensure maximum value for money when investing in the payroll. This means reducing the size of the teaching force but ensuring a high percentage of qualified teachers and increasing levels of workload to make full use of these qualified teachers.

Second, Government can explore financing options with other proprietors and NGOs/PVOs, so a proportion of teachers' salaries can be paid by these parties. This should not be at the expense of the Government's policy on free schooling for pupils. It is already the case that many community schools function with support from NGOs/PVOs, as well as from local community.

Third and most important, Government should engage in negotiations with major development partners to provide a transition budget support scheme that allows for some external funding to support the teacher payroll over an agreed number of years. This would create some space for right-sizing the teaching force and reforming the teacher salary bill to make it more affordable, so it can be adequately supported with domestic resources.

CHAPTER **10** > **Key outcomes and action points**

This chapter summarizes outcomes or conclusions of the situation analysis, as well as the main action points recommended for the Teaching Service Commission (TSC) to consider. The conclusions and outcomes are backed up by examples of the evidence and arguments underpinning them, including some comparisons with what obtains in other countries. Action points highlight the what, who, when, where and why of the recommendations made to the TSC to consider in planning its strategies and interventions. In the interest of coherence, the conclusions and recommendations have been organized under a few essential themes pertaining to the functions and mandates of the TSC.

10.1. 'Right-sizing' the teaching force

One of the most important conclusions of the situation analysis is that the TSC needs to grapple with the issue of right-sizing the national teaching force. This is a complex task involving several moving parts in stabilizing the total number of teachers in an equitable and efficient manner.

KEY CONCLUSION #1

Sierra Leone probably does not need to have a teaching force of 63,535 teachers for its current education system.

This total number yields pupil-teacher ratios (PTR) and pupil-qualified-teacher ratio (PQTR) as shown in the tables below for levels of the education system and for administrative regions. The PTRs are generously low, compared to national target and international standards set for PTR. A comparison with latest data for Africa, Low-Income Countries (LICs), Medium Income Countries (MICs) and Upper Middle-Income Countries (UMICs) indicates that PTR in Sierra Leone ranks more with MICs and UMICs than with Africa or LICs.

Pupil-teacher ratios by level of the education system

Pupil-teacher ratio for 2016	Pre-school	Primary	JSS	SSS	All
Pupil-Teacher Ratio (PTR)	23	38	21	24	32
Pupil-Qualified-Teacher Ratio PQTR	48	69	35	44	57

Source: Compiled from data in Annual School Census for 2016.

Pupil-teacher ratios by administrative region

Pupil-teacher ratio for 2016	East	North	South	West	National
Pupil-Teacher Ratio (PTR)	35	34	33	25	32
Pupil-Qualified-Teacher Ratio PQTR	72	64	65	37	57

Source: Compiled from data in Annual School Census for 2016.

KEY CONCLUSION #2

There is a large-scale, persistent, and detrimental gender imbalance in the national teaching force, with women making up an unacceptably small percentage of teachers; especially at JSS and SSS levels.

Trends in number of teachers by gender
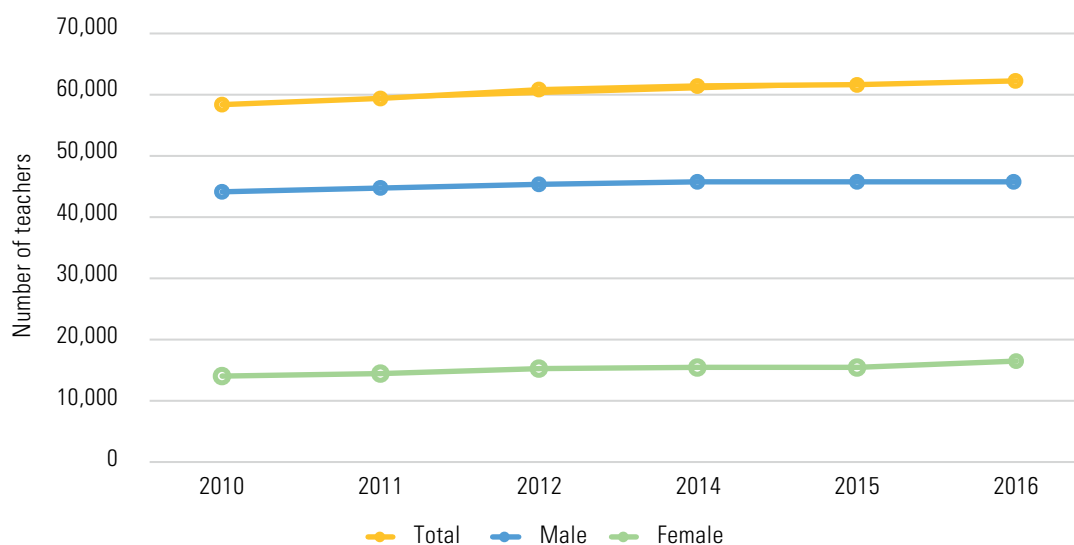
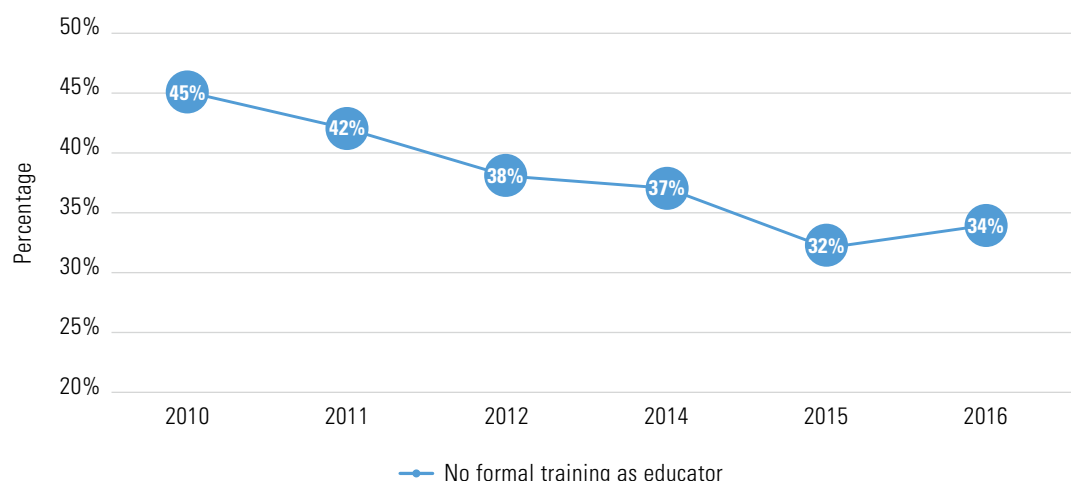**Source:** Sierra Leone Annual School Census data 2010–2012, 2014–2016.

This persistent gender imbalance needs to be addressed as part of the right-sizing process, in support of girls' education. TSC should ensure that the process of right-sizing the teaching force is accompanied by efforts to recruit more female teachers for a gender-balanced teaching force.

A comprehensive situation analysis of teachers and the teaching profession in Sierra Leone

There is a high percentage of unqualified teachers in the teaching force, and this needs to be reduced as part of a quality-enhancement process.

Teacher numbers spiked between 2004/05 and 2010/11. Number of primary teachers virtually doubled from 19,317 to 38, 125; whilst the number of secondary teachers tripled from 5,580 to 17,194 in this period. Since then the number of unqualified teachers in the teaching force has been declining, but not fast enough (figure below). To address this challenge, it is recommended that TSC's right-sizing process should include a freeze on recruitment of unqualified teachers. This freeze, together with the recruitment of qualified teachers will ensure that the percentage of qualified teachers increases, whilst the total number of teachers in the work force is reduced annually to achieve a more affordable pupil-teacher ratio.

**Percentage of teachers who have no formal training as educators**

— No formal training as educator

Source: Sierra Leone Annual School Census data 2010–2012, 2014–2016.

KEY CONCLUSION #4

The deployment of teachers across administrative regions is reasonably balanced and has held steady in recent years (2010 – 2016).

Percentage distribution of teachers by region

■2010 ■2016
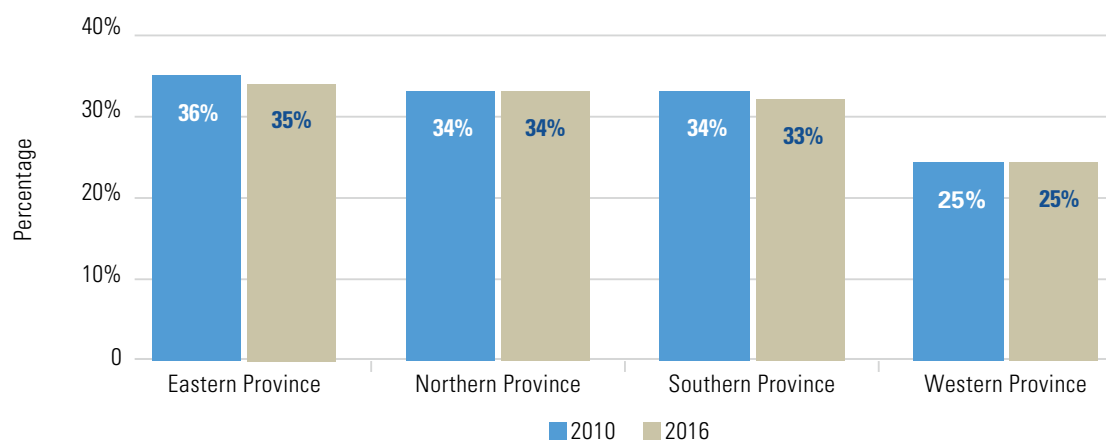
Source: Sierra Leone Annual School Census data 2010 and 2016.

But this conceals disparities at district and school levels that TSC would need to address as part of the right-sizing process. TSC district offices would need to nudge teacher numbers annually, to improve on pupil-teacher ratio across schools within their districts, especially in the Eastern and Southern provinces. This will be necessary to create a more equitable geographic distribution of teachers in the education system.

Sierra Leone cannot afford the recurrent budget expenditure necessary to maintain the current size of its teaching force at a total number of 63,535 teachers.

The teacher salary bill constitutes by far the largest share of the national recurrent budget. If we exclude the 7,019 teachers in private schools, the salary bill should cover 56,516 teachers in public schools. Yet there are only 34,643 teachers on the payroll (2015). This allocation of funds in the teacher salary budget only caters for 61.3 per cent of the teaching force that Government should be responsible for paying. Part of the problem is to do with verification of the teacher payroll and the use of Personal Identification Numbers (PIN) to avoid fraud.

However, it is evident that the size of the teaching force is simply unaffordable under the present conditions. It is recommended that TSC takes drastic steps, in consultation with school proprietors and teachers' unions (as well as with support from development partners), to reduce the size of the teaching force. This would make it possible to include more teachers on the payroll and improve on the salaries and conditions of qualified teachers in a right-sized teaching force.

The TSC will need to develop a strategic and transparent plan of action, with clear criteria and procedures for right-sizing the national teaching force.

Some key elements of such a strategic plan would include:

- Set clear and realistic targets for pupil-teacher ratio (PTR) and pupil-qualified-teacher ratio (PQTR) for primary, JSS, and SSS levels. The latest ESP fails to set targets for PQTR.

- TSC district offices should work with school heads to plan how every school can achieve this prescribed PTR and PQTR, as well as improve on gender balance in staffing.

- A complete ban should be imposed on the recruitment of unqualified teachers, enforced with penalties for schools that decide to recruit unqualified teachers.

- Recruitment of qualified female teachers is given the highest priority, with appropriate incentives to attract and retain such teachers.

- TSC district offices give priority to disadvantaged schools within their district, in approving and deploying qualified teachers, or in transferring qualified teachers.

- Disadvantaged districts are given priority in the recruitment and deployment of qualified teachers, or in the transfer of qualified teachers between districts.

10.2. Enhancing teacher quality and professionalism

The prevailing perception of quality across the education system uses qualifications as proxy for teacher quality. This perception also associates quality schools and quality teachers with the performance of students and their examination results. This presents restrictions and challenges for the TSC to grapple with, in its efforts to enhance teacher quality and professionalism.

KEY CONCLUSION #7

The TSC will need to choose between two schools of thought pertaining to quality and the expectations of teachers as professionals.

A first school of thought stresses proficiency in the basics of what to teach and how to teach, and has a focus on knowledge of subject and pedagogical techniques, with a stint of practical teaching in schools. This is the predominant model in the pre-service teacher education courses in the country. This model is also being reinforced by a major donor-funded project which focuses on training in the use of "Lesson Plans" to improve teacher performance in schools.

A second school of thought perceives teachers as professionals capable of making judgements in complex learning situations and using their expertise to accomplish set educational objectives. Such teachers do not simply know what to teach and how to teach. They also understand why they teach and the outcomes they can expect from successful teaching. In addition, they have an awareness of what constitutes quality learning environments and how they can contribute to the achievement of development of learners, the school, the community, and the nation. If the TSC decides to adopt this more comprehensive model of teacher competencies (figure below) it will need to plan for major changes in the expectations set out for teachers in the education system.

Some issues that will need to be addressed in a TSC plan for a comprehensive quality model that stresses competencies beyond what to teach and how to teach will include the following:

- The TSC (and MEST) engage in technical discussions to persuade the teacher education institutions to incorporate key elements in their courses, such as elements of the national curriculum framework and teaching syllabus for all subjects. These outline the prescribed learning for pupils as well as the objectives of the teaching-learning process. They also highlight the needs of learners in schools and help trainee teachers understand why they teach, as well as the expected developmental results of successful teaching.

- Alternatively, the TSC should work to persuade the teacher education institutions to offer training through much shorter and more intensive courses that focus

on what to teach and how to teach (including use of lesson plans). This would at least turn out teachers who are proficient in knowledge of subject matter and pedagogical techniques.

- The TSC should work in partnership with the MEST Inspectorate and the teacher education institutions, to input critical elements into in-service courses that will enhance teacher competencies in areas beyond what to teach and how to teach. An example of this type of in-service training is the massive programme that benefited almost all teachers during the Ebola crisis. This did not deal with what to teach and how to teach. Rather it focused on safe learning elements in schools. It not only provided training, but also made available the equipment and materials for creating and maintaining safe learning environments.

- The TSC can also make use of existing resources. One example can be existing curriculum framework materials (simplified pamphlets) on: Equity and Inclusion; Assessment and Accountability; Quality and Integrity; Partnerships and Stake-Holder Roles; as well as Social Cohesion and Celebration of Diversity. These relate to key priorities and principles in the basic education curriculum framework and can help teachers understand why they teach as well as what should be the developmental outcomes of successful teaching.

- TSC district offices can also engage with schools being supported by the Word Bank to prepare school improvement plans in return for small grants. This type of work can help teachers to develop a better understanding of the school as a development institution with goals and priorities that include (but go beyond) what to teach and how to teach.

A comprehensive situation analysis of teachers and the teaching profession in Sierra Leone
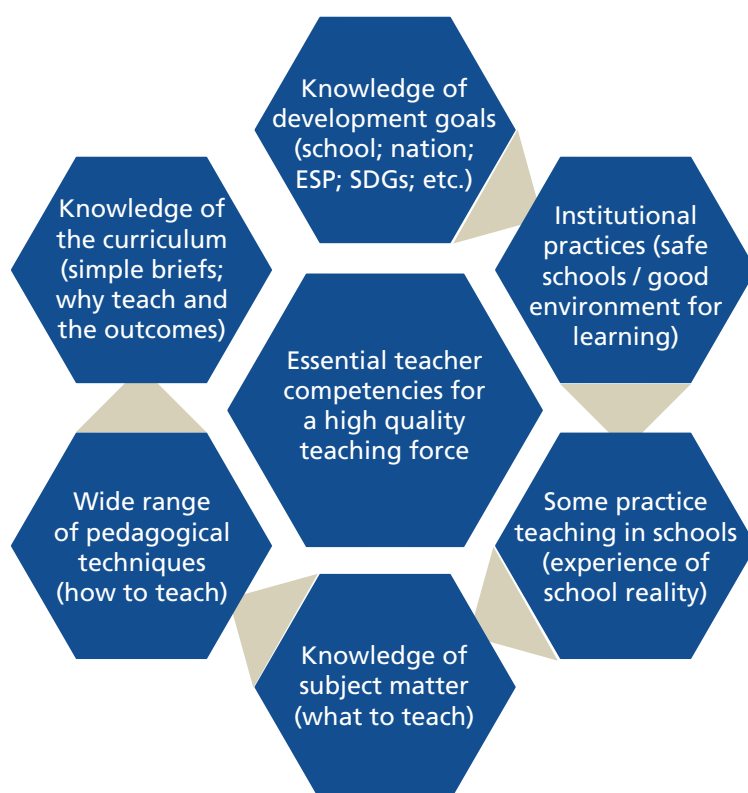
The TSC should clearly define and popularize its expectations of teachers as professionals. On this basis it should also develop a plan for working with MEST Inspectorate and teacher education institutions to prepare teachers for meeting these expectations.

D

10.3. Investing in a quality-oriented teaching force

The mandate of the TSC includes managing the national teaching force, so it is critical that there should be a clear and shared understanding of what this entity really is in practice. This study has argued that thousands of teachers working in schools do not necessarily constitute what can be defined as a national teaching force. A national teaching force is a dynamic entity with elements of coherence that bind together thousands of teachers despite the diversity in: type of schools in which they work; subject areas that they teach; religious beliefs and ideologies; language and culture; etc. It is these coherence elements that the TSC must seek to nurture and strengthen if it is to successfully manage a national teaching force.

KEY CONCLUSION #9

The TSC will need to advocate for re-cultivation of elements of coherence that define the teaching force. They include subject associations, teachers' unions, consultative bodies, research and study groups, communities of practice, school clubs, and SMCs.
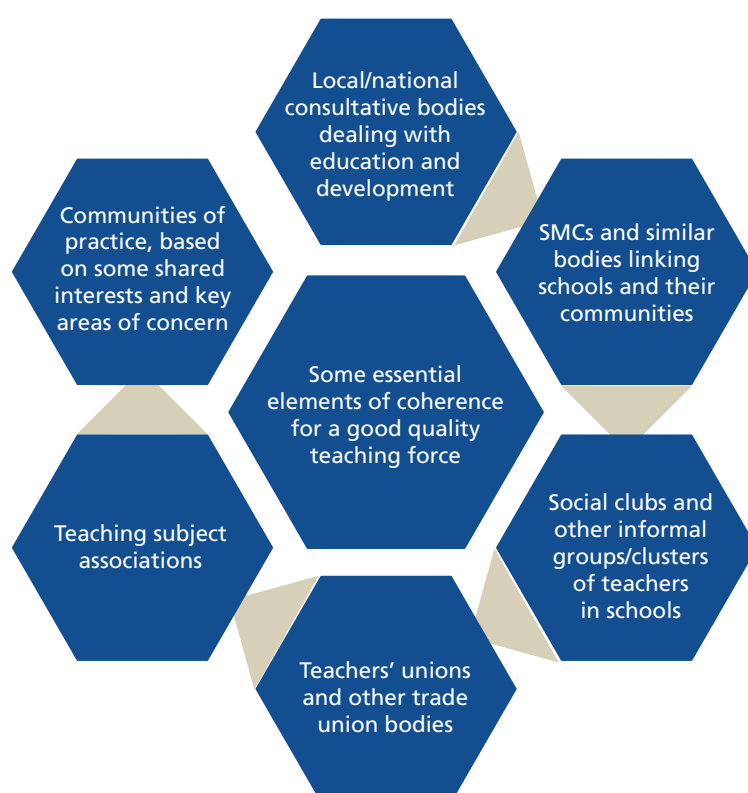
There is currently much confusion over teacher numbers in terms of the demand and supply for different categories of teachers. This is due to the lack of coordination between teacher educators and teacher employers, as well as teacher managers.

It is recommended that TSC should develop strategies for projecting demand and requirements for different categories of teachers. This should be used to signal to teacher education colleges on numbers and categories of teachers needed on the medium to long term.

It is also recommended that TSC should request annual data on enrolment and graduation from various teacher education courses and use these for planning; as well as making them accessible on the TSC website.

KEY CONCLUSION #**11**

Relevance is a key dimension of a quality teaching force, but teachers are not prepared to deal with the needs of pupils, since the teacher education courses do not deal with the national curriculum framework and teaching syllabus developed for basic education.

It is recommended that the TSC advocates for teacher education institutions to include elements of the new curriculum framework and teaching syllabus for the various subjects in their courses.

KEY CONCLUSION #**12**

Effectiveness is another key dimension of a quality teaching force. If this is assessed in terms of learning achievement and student performance in major examinations, then the national teaching force in Sierra Leone scores poorly on effectiveness. Results at the WASSCE examinations indicate that in all subjects, less than 30 per cent of students obtained pass grades in any given year between 2005 and 2012.

WASSCE Passes (%) – Western Area
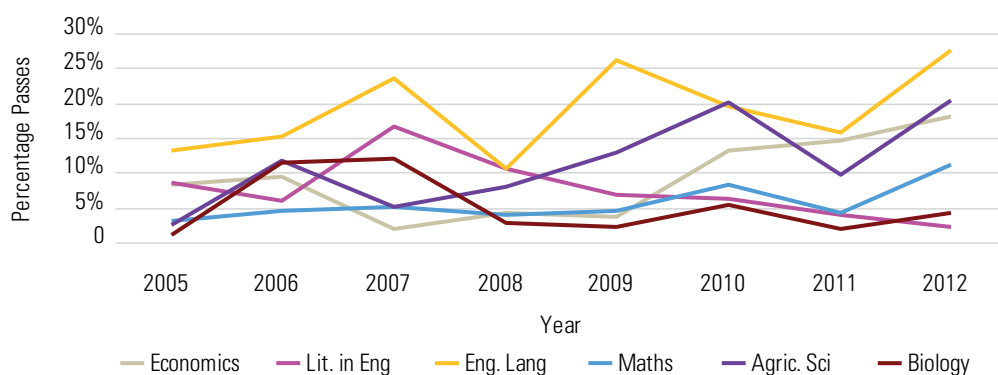
Source: West African Examinations Council (WAEC) Sierra Leone Office.

The competence of the teachers is in question of course, but in many developing countries like Sierra Leone the problem starts with teachers being absent from school, or not teaching in class even though they may be present in school. The latest World Development Report from the World Bank indicates that across seven African countries surprise school visits revealed that 20 per cent of teachers were absent from school and another 20 per cent were not in class even though they were in school. This is a 40 per cent teacher absenteeism in these countries, and the report points out that the problem is greatest in rural areas and remote schools. Against this, the Situation Room in MEST consistently reports teacher attendance rate of 85 per cent (June 2017) and 87 per cent (July 2017). The teachers in Sierra Leone may be doing much better than their counterparts in the seven African countries mentioned in the WDR report, or the Situation Room reports may not be accurate.

It is recommended the TSC district offices should randomly monitor teacher attendance and classroom presence, using unannounced visits. This is required to confirm the highly positive data from the Situation Room.

It is also recommended that the TSC should support efforts initiated by UNICEF and implemented by the MEST Inspectorate, to facilitate continuous professional development through clusters of schools that engage in school-based training based on difficulties encountered in classrooms and needs expressed by teachers.

10.4. Managing an affordable teaching force

There is a critical need to reform record keeping and then making routine data on teachers as well as the teaching force available on the web. Government should engage in negotiations with major development partners to provide a transition budget support scheme that allows for some external funding to support the teacher payroll over an agreed number of years. This would create some space for reforming the teacher salary bill and make it affordable with domestic resources.

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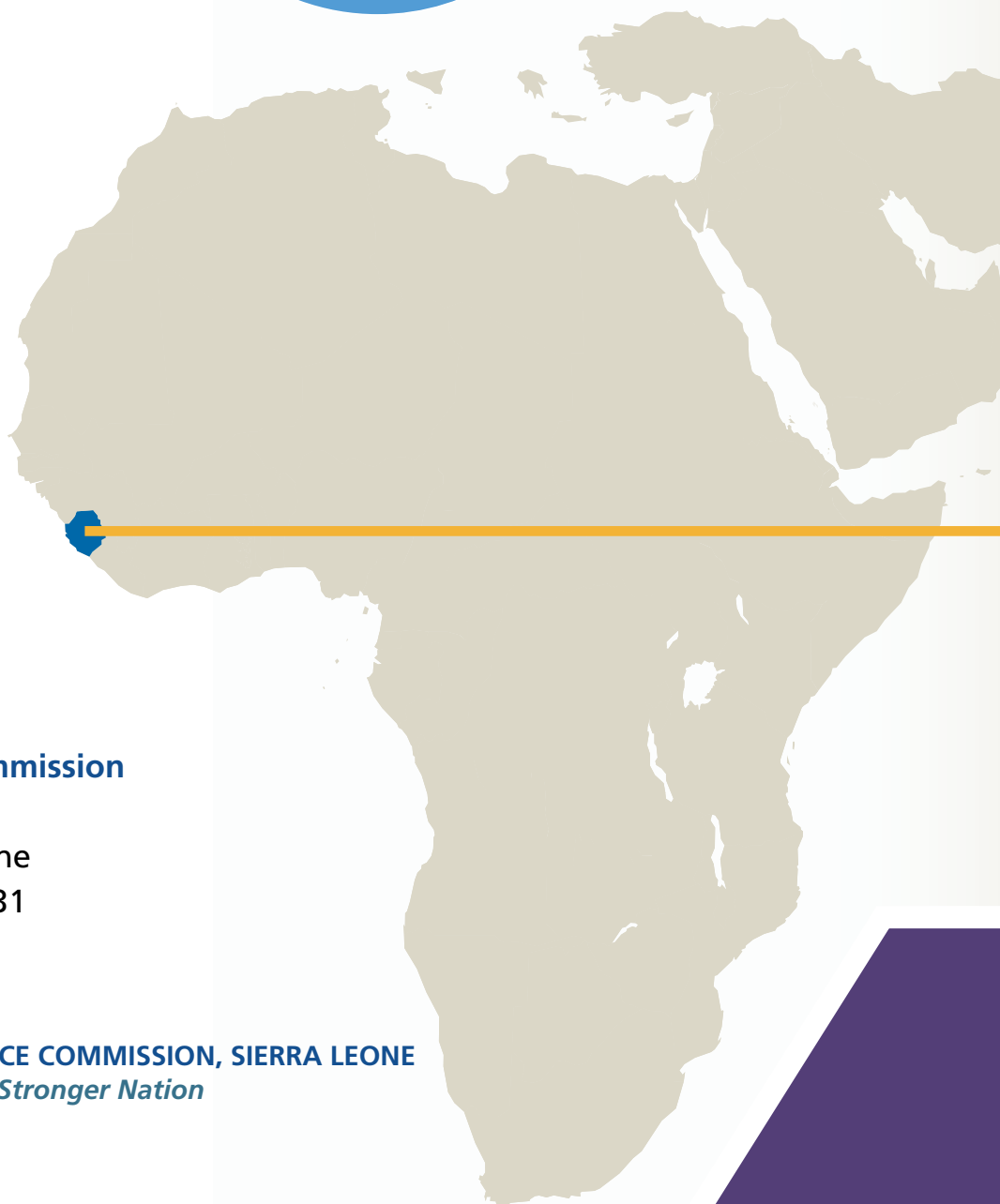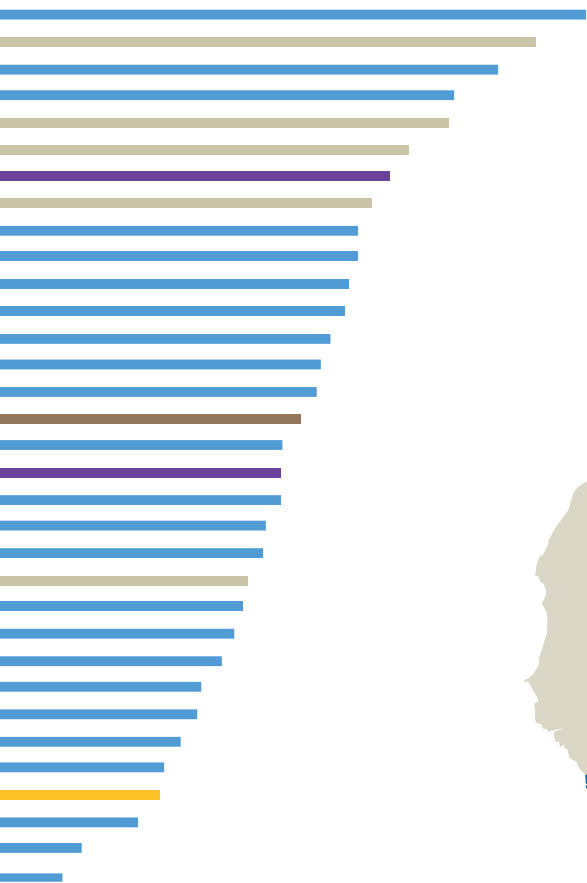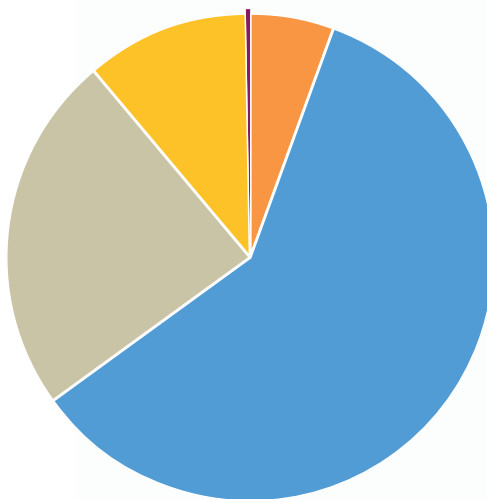
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