The Living and Working Conditions of Teachers in Tanzania
Findings of a Research Report

This brief is a summary of the 2004 research report, “The Living and Working Conditions of Teachers in Tanzania” (ISBN 9987-423-01-9) produced by HakiElimu and the Tanzania Teachers’ Union (TTU).

Why this study?
Since the Tanzanian government launched the Primary Education Development Plan (PEDP) in 2001, significant progress has been made in increasing access to basic education. However, improving the quality of education remains a fundamental challenge. One of the most important factors affecting quality of education is the quality of teachers. Successful implementation of PEDP cannot be undertaken without a clear understanding of how to recruit and retain competent and motivated teachers. This study was carried out to understand teachers’ own perceptions about their living and working conditions, so as to inform policy reforms and improve their situation. While this study is now somewhat dated, its key findings continue to be relevant today.

Methods
The study was designed and carried out by an independent consultant on behalf of the Tanzania Teachers Union (TTU), with analytical support from HakiElimu. Information was gathered from one district within each of Tanzania’s seven educational zones: Ilala, Manyoni, Moshi Municipality, Kibondo, Mwanza City, Ludewa and Lindi Rural. The study provides teachers’ views from a range of socio-cultural environments. In each district, three primary schools and two secondary schools (one private and one public) were selected for analysis.

Questionnaires were distributed to teachers to collect quantitative data. In addition, qualitative data was obtained through personal interviews with selected teachers. Teachers were selected in a manner that ensured diversity, taking gender and formal qualifications into account, so as to accurately represent the composition of the teaching force.

In all, 74 primary school teachers and 35 secondary school teachers were interviewed, and 1,383 teachers completed detailed questionnaires. Where possible, the study drew comparisons to a similar study conducted in 1991.

Key Findings

Respectability: One noticeable trend since 1990 was a perceived decrease in the respectability associated with the teaching profession. Interviews revealed that many teachers, particularly those in secondary school, felt that their profession was not valued by society, as shown in Table 1.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interview Question</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>Don’t know</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Are teachers respected?</td>
<td>69.5%</td>
<td>18.0%</td>
<td>12.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Would you leave teaching if you found another job?</td>
<td>50.9%</td>
<td>37.3%</td>
<td>11.8%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Would you advise your child to become a teacher?</td>
<td>40.3%</td>
<td>41.9%</td>
<td>17.7%</td>
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</table>

Teachers in rural areas, where fewer people have regular incomes, were more likely to feel that their profession was respected. Nevertheless, many interviewees said they had become teachers as a last resort. Overall, about one third of teachers said they would seek other jobs if they had the chance, and 40 percent would not advise their children to go into teaching.

Salaries: This decline in the perceived social status of teachers may reflect a declining standard of living, as evidenced by salaries. The study found that a Grade A teacher earns about Tshs 70,000 per month, which almost all (97%) teachers found to be grossly inadequate. Not surprisingly, a quarter of teachers surveyed said that they engaged in other activities to bring in supplemental income.

Living Conditions: Teachers surveyed also reported concerns regarding scarcity of teacher housing, inadequacy of the government-implemented health insurance plan, difficulties in transferring to another school, significant delays in receiving salaries, and the need to travel to District Council offices to collect their salaries, which can often be a long and expensive trip for teachers in rural areas.
**Class Size:** Quantitative data analysis showed that teachers spent an average of 16 hours a week teaching, which is low compared to similar countries. However, most interviewees reported having heavy workloads, particularly those in rural schools. This may in part be due to teachers having to spend a significant amount of time marking student assignments, given large classes.

Large class size may also contribute to high support for corporal punishment (nearly 90 percent of sampled teachers). Large classes also put a strain on limited teaching and learning resources, particularly textbooks. Only two percent of teachers interviewed said their schools were adequately equipped. These working conditions clearly have a negative impact on the quality of education.

**Teacher Shortages:** Faced with such difficulties, the finding that sampled schools have largely been unable to attract and retain adequate competent teachers is not surprising. The lack of qualified teachers dates back, in part, to the mass recruitment of teachers under the Universal Primary Education (UPE) drive. Teacher qualifications were to be supplemented by in-service courses. However, while most teachers interviewed reported having attended these sessions, interviewees also complained of not being properly briefed on curriculum changes. In addition, most teachers are not equipped to teach about crucial topics such as HIV/AIDS, or to implement the new vocational training curriculum (“stadi za kazi”).

**Recommendations**

According to this study, the status and working conditions of teachers do not reflect their important role in improving the quality of education and building the nation. To begin improving the quality of education in Tanzania, it is essential that the Government (in particular, the Ministry of Education and Vocational Training), the TTU and NGOs work on the findings of this study to improve teachers’ living and working conditions. A list of specific recommendations for each of these actors is listed below:

**Government:**
- Specify a required number of weekly teaching hours.
- Develop incentive packages to attract teachers, especially Grade A qualified females, to work in “difficult” regions, districts and schools.
- Ensure that teacher salaries are paid in a timely and efficient manner, and explore ways to reduce travel time and costs to collect salaries.
- Strengthen the health insurance scheme to make it better and more reliably serve teachers’ needs.

**TTU:**
- Continue advocating for fair salaries.
- Inform all teachers of their rights and responsibilities.
- Provide opportunities for greater levels of teacher participation in developing curricula and school policy.
- Produce an annual report on the state of teachers, highlighting major achievements and shortcomings, and distribute to members.

**NGOs:**
- Include teachers’ concerns in advocacy work
- Distribute information on policy to schools
- Assist in building capacity of and developing joint initiatives with TTU

This brief was prepared by Katherine Manchester and Ruth Carlitz, and edited by Rakesh Rajani.