

Mapping of Corruption Risks in the Education Sector in Liberia



Final Assessment Report

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Simpson Building, Mamba Point
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Submitted by:
Varney Arthur Yengbeh, Jr.
Consultant

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Executive Summary

The Government of Liberia (GOL) through the Liberia Anti-Corruption Commission (LACC) and the Ministry of Education (MOE), and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) have been implementing a pilot project entitled, **Mapping of Corruption Risks in the Education Sector in Liberia**, to promote citizens oversight in the fight against corruption in the country. This study builds on anti-corruption awareness campaign conducted during the first phase by the LACC in eight public schools in five education districts within Montserrado County. In this second phase, we assessed ten public schools in seven education districts within Montserrado County. Accordingly, the overall assessment revealed that corruption is prevalent in the education sector at national, county, district and school levels.

Purpose

The overarching objective of this study was to identify and measure institutional factors that contribute to leakages, bottlenecks and accountability failures in the education sector in Liberia. The study supports learning lessons about the education sector in Montserrado County as well as to assist the Ministry of Education to develop a risk reduction and implementation plan in the fight against corruption.

Methodology and Constraints

Our assessment methodology was designed to use multi-pronged approach and triangulation to ensure the robustness of evidence-based evaluation, data and findings. To this end, we used multiple methods and multiple data sources including perception questionnaire for leadership and management, a separate perception questionnaire for students. Four different stakeholder groups were identified and a total of 144 persons interviewed: 101 men and 43 women. Ten public schools were assessed using the PETS. One major limitation of this assessment as a whole was the poor record keeping system in the various schools.

On the positive side, the assessment team was able to gather a rich amount of empirical data in a reasonable time. We were guided by a strong desire to collect quantitative and qualitative data in order to ensure that our findings and recommendations were strongly based on evidence.

Lessons Learned

This assessment generated the major lessons on six broad themes that can be drawn on the experience from the education sector that might have a wider, generic application. All of these issues have real implications for decentralization implementation in the education sector.

- Significance of holistic approach including sustained anti-corruption awareness campaign, involvement of all stakeholders particularly the MOE, legal power to prosecute, prevention, and independent oversight body to work together with the LACC.
- Threats to teaching and learning environment (*active participation of students and teachers in corruption, some parents promote it, larger citizenry helpless, ineffectiveness of the government to address corruption in the education sector*)
- Civil society, gender and youth (*lack of active participation of these key groups to understand corruption in the broader context of human rights; citizens cannot leave the fight against corruption to the government alone.*)
- Unintended consequence due to the effectiveness of direct deposit system in commercial banks has led to high absenteeism amongst teachers
- Monitoring and supervision (*lack of knowledge and access to critical information at all levels breed rampant corruption.*)
- Humility (*While all stakeholders agreed that there is high level of corruption in the education sector, no stakeholder group took full responsibility and was humble to find the way forward. This will go far in gaining their respect, support and collaboration of all Liberians.*)

Conclusions

The study confirms that corruption is widespread in the education sector in Liberia. All stakeholder groups agreed to this current reality. This report therefore identifies the magnitude, challenges and several possible strategic and operational interventions for putting the Liberian education system on the right path, which will create the basis for a strong, vibrant, educated and healthy citizenry in the future.

Recommendations

In an effort to ensure the usefulness and relevancy of this study, we make key strategic and operational recommendations for the next phase of this project.

Acronyms

APS	Arthington Public School
CEO	County Education Officer
DEO	District Education Officer
DTMHS	D. Twe Memorial High School
EFA	Education For All
EJGHS	E. Jonathan Goodridge High School
ESP	Education Sector Plan
ETMI	Elizabeth Tubman Memorial Institute
GOL	Government of Liberia
KPS	Kpallah Public School
LACC	Liberia Anti-Corruption Commission
MDGs	Millennium Development Goals
MNJHS	Matilda Newport Junior High School
MOE	Ministry of Education
MOF	Ministry of Finance
MOJ	Ministry of Justice
MPEA	Ministry of Planning and Economic Affairs
MSJHS	Marvii Sonii Junior High School
NPS	Nyehn Public School
PCHS	Paynesville Community High School
PETS	Public Expenditure Tracking Surveys
PFM	Public Financial Management
PTA	Parent Teacher Association
TOR	Terms of Reference
UNCAC	United Nations Convention Against Corruption
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNICEF	United Nations Children’s and Education Fund
UNOPS	United Nations Office for Project Services
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
WVSTHS	William V. S. Tubman High School

MAPPING OF CORRUPTION RISKS IN THE EDUCATION SECTOR IN LIBERIA

FINAL ASSESSMENT REPORT

1. Introduction

1.1 Context

In Liberia, the Ministry of Finance approves the annual budget allocations while the Ministry of Education carries out the disbursement of public funds and supplies to schools either directly or through county and district education officers. Major shortcomings in the accountability and transparency practices lead to corruption and leakages. As a consequence, the education system is under scrutiny due to public sensitivity to corruption and international community agenda aimed at expressing grave concerns over the need for good governance and management of the educational sector. It is necessary to understand this reality in order to put in place institutional and policy mechanisms for systems improvement. This will require well thought out research of the developments within the education sector. According to the Education Sector Plan (2010-2020),

“the extent to which improvements in the education system can be achieved is dependent on the management and funding provided. There are shortcomings in what presently exists and in this regard governance and management goals and objectives have been revisited and revised. The main medium-term goal for governance and management of the education system is the establishment of processes through which the Ministry of Education is able to manage an efficient and accountable decentralized system that delivers relevant learning and training opportunities of quality.”

At present, open communications and proper documentation mechanisms are not in place to provide accountability and justification of transactions.¹ Moreover, planning and policy pronouncements do not usually lead to proper implementation in Liberia.

This pilot project entitled, **Mapping of Corruption Risks in the Education Sector in Liberia**, is being implemented by the Liberia Anti-Corruption Commission (LACC) in close collaboration with the Ministry of Education (MOE). The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) has provided the funding and technical support. The intended audience is UNDP, LACC, MOE, public officials & civil servants, policy-makers, civil society organizations, the media and development partners who have special interest in how and why corruption has had a negative impact on the education sector in the country.

1.2 Purpose, objectives and expected use of this assessment

The primary purpose of this assessment is to identify and measure institutional factors that contribute to leakages, bottlenecks and accountability failures in the education sector in Liberia. The study supports learning lessons about the education sector in seven education districts within Montserrado County as well as to assist the Ministry of Education to develop a risk reduction and implementation plan in the fight against corruption.

Through this assessment, we have sought to promote the use of evidence-based evaluation so that lessons learned inform both management decision processes and education programming in the future. To this end, we have endeavoured to guide this assessment by the criteria of utility, credibility, relevance, gender equity and fairness.

¹ USAID's Leadership in Public Financial Management Summary Report on the Ministry of Education (2012), pp31.

1.3 Methodology and Limitations

This assessment was carried out by a team of ten evaluators and two supervisors headed by Varney Arthur Yengbeh, Jr. (*Team Leader and National Consultant*). The assessment team comprised six women and six men who conducted the data collection exercise. A total of ten public schools were visited within seven education districts in Montserrado County. MOE officials, county education officer, district education officers, principals, teachers and students were interviewed.



Figure 1. Map of Public Schools Visited by the Assessment Team

The work began in mid-November 2012 with literature review and consultations with key stakeholders. The consultant worked together with UNDP Liberia to clarify the nature of the assessment, initial planning and constructive engagement with LACC and MOE. The desk review and consultative meetings resulted in an inception report in early December 2012. In late December 2012, the consultant prepared a rapid data assessment report aimed at determining the availability of records at all levels. This report examined corruption assessment tools and anti-corruption interventions in the education sector. It revealed a poor record keeping system and difficulties of getting relevant studies and documents in Liberia. Both the inception and rapid data assessment reports informed this study.

The field work was preceded by a design of three survey instruments and the training of ten enumerators and two supervisors by the consultant. Moreover, the method of data collection involved in-depth interviews with key informants, focus group discussions and a stratified sample which was drawn at the national, county, district and school levels.

The methodology used the following methods and tools in order to achieve its objectives:

- An initial desk review and consultations with UNDP Liberia, MOE, LACC and UNESCO, culminated in an inception report
- Rapid data assessment report
- Several meetings with UNDP, LACC and MOE to understand the assessment
- Public Expenditure Tracking Survey (PETS)

- a perception questionnaire / interview guide for leadership and management
- a perception questionnaire / interview guide for students
- field visits to 10 public schools in seven education districts in Montserrado County
- 144 key stakeholders (*list in Annex 4*) interviewed in person
- data analysis and report writing
- debriefing sessions to present preliminary findings and obtain inputs
- preparation and submission of a draft assessment report for comments
- validation workshop to present assessment findings for all stakeholders
- production of the final assessment report.

Education Sector Assessment Tools. Public Expenditure Tracking Surveys (PETS) were designed and utilized to capture quantitative data on the flows of resources (*people, public funds and materials*) from MOE central to the schools. The goal of the leadership and management questionnaire was to capture qualitative and quantitative data on the perceptions of MOE officials, CEO/DEOs, principals and teachers as well as to identify the institutional factors that contribute to corruption risks in the education sector in Liberia. Similarly, the student questionnaire was designed to capture qualitative and quantitative data on the perceptions of students and determine their own understanding and involvement in the acts of corruption at the various public schools.

In-depth interviews were carried out during the field work from 20-21 March 2013, and a debriefing session was held with the assessment team on 27 March 2013. Data collection was finished on 5 April 2013. The evaluation team gathered a rich amount of qualitative and quantitative data. A careful analysis of the data took longer than originally planned. In planning this exercise, the evaluation team identified four key stakeholder groups: Government of Liberia (*MOE, MOF and CSA*), Montserrado County Education Officer and District Education Officers, School Administration (*principals and teachers*), and students.

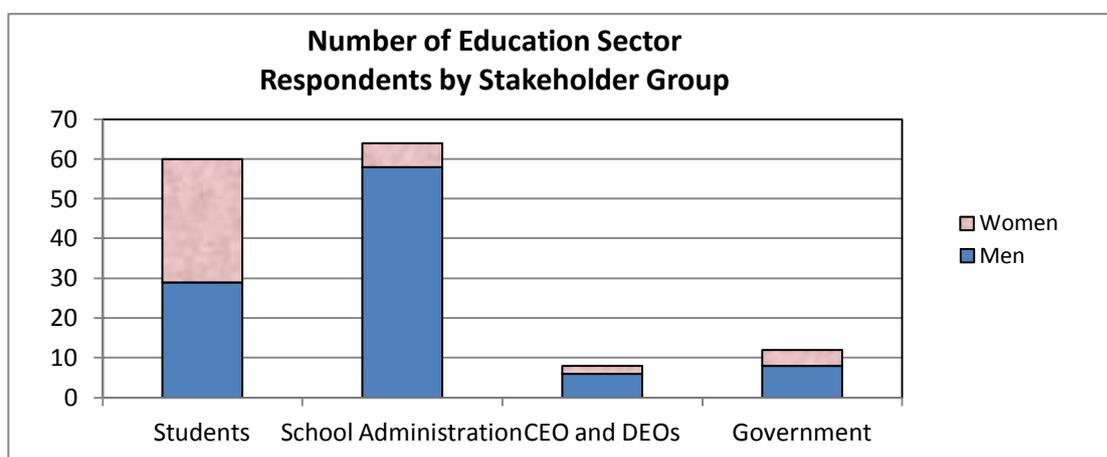


Figure 2. Number of education sector respondents by stakeholder groups

As shown in Figure 2 above, the actual breakdown between women and men respondents varied greatly among the different stakeholder groups. The ratio of women to men was highest among the students and lowest among the CEO/DEOs. School administration (*principals and teachers*) followed by students had far more respondents than the Government and CEO/DEOs stakeholder groups.

The assessment team made a concerted effort to reach out to equal number of men and women. Although we did everything to gain access to women stakeholders, the study revealed that women

are under-represented in both the teaching profession and education administration. This was difficult, if not impossible, at the different levels of the education ladder at the national, county, district and within the various schools assessed. A total of 144 persons were interviewed: 101 men and 43 women. Figure 3 below shows the proportion of stakeholders interviewed by gender.

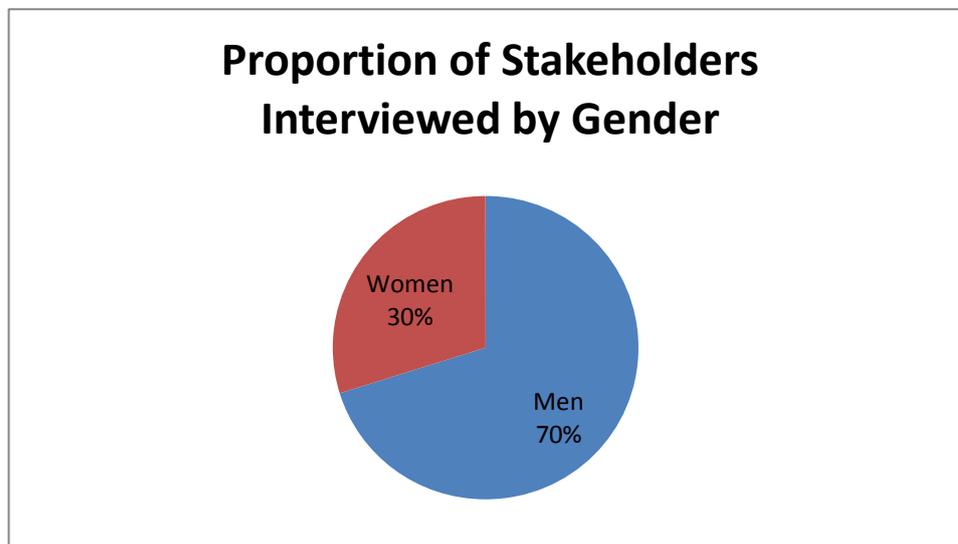


Figure 3. Proportion of stakeholders interviewed by gender

This study depends heavily on the data gathered from the PETS and the perceptions of 144 stakeholders interviewed. Our interviews began by assuring each respondent that their answers would be treated strictly confidential. Respondents were therefore open and frank in their responses.

To a large extent possible, the report gives the different stakeholders a real voice in this assessment. Direct quotations are drawn from them and presented in italics with a grey background, and are identified by stakeholder group rather than by individual persons in order to protect their confidentiality.

1.4 Limitations

A number of limitations must be acknowledged at the outset. First and foremost, the rapid data assessment was based on an analytical inventory of existing studies, relevant documents and education policy research that are publicly available. Because of resource and time constraints, we were not able to first check on the availability of records as required. Second, the empirical evidence to back up what anti-corruption interventions work best and why will be fully examined in the next phases.

2. Assessment Findings and Implications by Stakeholder Groups

2.1 Introduction

Liberia is ranked 75/176 on Transparency International's Corruption Perceptions Index 2012. According to the public opinion polls on corruption, 89 percent of Liberians reported paying a bribe in 2010. Liberians perceive corruption to be mostly severed within the police (*ranked 4.1 out of 5*), education (3.8), judiciary (3.7), public officials and civil servants (3.6), legislature (3.6), business and private sector (3.2), political parties (2.9), NGOs (2.5), media (2.4), military (2.3) and religious groups (1.9). These institutions are key for the decentralization process in different ways. The provision of public goods and services such as education, health, agriculture, water and sanitation,

etc. have long been provided through highly-centralized institutions based in Monrovia. The poll further indicates that 49 percent of the respondents believe the corruption is increasing, 26 percent corruption decreasing and the remaining 25 percent that corruption is unchanged. Forty-seven (47) percent of people perceived the Government efforts to fight corruption are ineffective, 46 percent effective and 6 percent neither effective nor ineffective.²

Therefore, the challenges and opportunities in the fight against corruption in Liberia should be examined in a larger systemic context. Fighting corruption requires firstly a fundamental change in the mind-set of all Liberians in terms of their behaviours and attitudes as well as setting up efficient and effective systems to detect, prevent, and monitor acts of corruption both within the public and private sectors.

Second, the GOL has instituted measures to combat corruption through the establishment of the LACC, the Whistle Blower Act, the Freedom of Information Act, and the Education Act of 2011. The 2011 Education Act specifically mandates the MOE to prescribe, promulgate and publish regulations governing instructional standards and codes of conduct in the education sector. Certain administrative offences under the Education Act are insubordination to superior, dereliction of duty, absence without leave, fighting or disturbing at work places, falsification of grades, documents and signatures, soliciting or offering bribes, and soliciting money that is unauthorized by school administrators from students or parents. Sexual offences are defined as sexual coercion, intimidation or blackmail, sexual assault, sexual abuse, impregnating student, and rape and gang rape.

In furtherance of its mandate, the LACC recently conducted a Pilot Awareness Campaign in Public Schools: Mapping Corruption Risks in the Education Sector in Montserrado County, October 10-26, 2012.

On the other hand, there is no clear evidence on the evaluation of anti-corruption legislation and its impact on the education sector in Liberia. The lack of prosecution and sanction is likely a major weakness in the control mechanism. This study considers recent reports of corruption in the media. The admission by national leaders that corruption is prevalent in the country raises an alarming concern about the quality of service delivery in the public sector.³ This study confirms that the education sector is just as affected by endemic corruption as other sectors in the country.

Consequently, this study is ground-breaking in that the PETS are being used for the first time in Liberia to track the flows of public resources from the central government to the school level. We gathered a set of rich empirical data documenting which interventions may work most effectively and efficiently for improved education outcomes and targeted reforms.

There is extensive amount of existing knowledge and expertise relevant to fighting against corruption and strengthening education systems. Nonetheless, a question still remains as to what extent policy-makers and decision-makers have the political will to do the right thing by confronting corruption in the education sector directly. Not only is the Liberian education system in a mess but the study confirms that the system is actually broken. It needs well-organized and sustainable interventions over a long haul rather than quick fixes.

² http://www.transparency.org/country#LBR_PublicOpinion Accessed 21 December 2012.

³ William Q. Harmon. 2012. Corruption at MOE Impedes Quality Education, New Report Indicates. Daily Observer. August 16, 2012. At: <http://liberianobserver.com/index.php/news/item/2216-corruption-at-moe-impedes-quality-education-new-report-indicates>

2.2 Most Significant Change

At the beginning of our perception interviews, we asked the different respondents a totally open question: “Thinking about all the changes in the education sector in Liberia, what, in your opinion, has been the most significant change of all? Why is this change important?” This helped respondents to focus specifically on the impact or outcome level rather than activities or outputs. The following is a rich sample of responses from the various stakeholder groups to this key question.

Fees for grades 1 to 9 are free, although senior high students pay low fees. This has helped us and our parents greatly. Girl child education has also been prioritized.

- Students

The increment in teacher salaries has helped them to be in our classrooms on a regular and timely basis.

- Students

The government has provided us with instructional materials such as text books, copy books, pens, pencils as well as the renovation of our school equipped with a reading room and toilets.

- Students

Free education has helped the poor to obtain education.

- School Administration

The most significant change is better salaries and benefits which has improved the living conditions of teachers. Teachers are also assigned according to their qualifications.

- School Administration

With the payment of salaries through direct deposit, teachers can now decide when to collect their salaries from the bank.

- School Administration

The Education Act which states that all senior high schools must be taught by degree holders.

- School Administration

The improved academic calendar along with provision of curriculum are helping teachers to be more effective in the teaching and learning process in the education sector.

- School Administration

Free education has been the most significant change. This is only for primary and basic education levels including grades 1 to 9. This change is important because we now have thousands of students coming to school as compared to the past. In the past, most parents could not afford to send their children to school. Today, there is tremendous increment in the enrolment of students at all grade levels. But the compulsory part is not working at all. The real challenge is to provide quality education for our children in our schools. This is not happening.

- CEO/DEOs

Current teacher salary is encouraging and attracting more qualified teachers to teach our children. Before then, a teacher could not afford to buy their own food. So corruption was too high. Teachers could not stop taking money from their students. I think this has been the most significant change of all.

- CEO/DEOs

The most significant change is that educators used to open and operate schools before. Because our public schools are failing, private business people see this as an opportunity to open schools all over the place after they have failed in other ventures. Before the war, teacher replacement was done within three months. It is taking 3 or more years today. The payments of salary through the direct deposits have also made teachers reckless. Before, payment was decentralized and carried out at the district level. Because we do not see the payroll today, so many teachers are paid monthly without working.

- CEO/DEOs

The most significant change was that the Education Act of 2011 which calls for the decentralization and establishment of County School Board to manage the affairs of the county education process. Decentralization is key because it deals with restructuring the MOE, curriculum, etc. This has to do with devolving certain functions from the central to local levels. Currently, some major decisions are to be made at the county level. As a result, we have developed financial management policy, personnel handbook and code of conduct. All teacher training institutions will also become autonomous to handle their own budget, employment and procurement. But decentralization has not been fully implemented.

- Government

The change in the education sector has been gradual but it needs to be radical. It is very difficult to remove unqualified teachers from the payroll. Contractors and vendors failed to provide their services before. We want them to be held accountable. Remuneration of teachers has increased but more needs to be done. This is the most significant change because it motives and attracts qualified people to go in the classroom. But this change is very slow. We need to move faster in attracting more qualified people in our schools.

- Government

Personally, I don't believe that there has been a significant change. It is the same old song or talk as in the past. Until there is a dramatic action, the system is going to be the same way. People are resistant to change. Honestly, there have been political changes but they will not address the real issues at hand. A major challenge at MOE has to do with corruption. Everyone is fully aware but nothing has happened.

- Government

I have not seen any major change in terms of teaching and learning. Nothing has changed at all. The reason is that we have the same old people working in the system. This is a real challenge for all of us. We are now doing a lot of planning. Everything will not happen at once. We will stay focus to improve this system.

- Government

A significant change is the degradation of the teaching and learning environment. Students are now graduating from our school system without the ability to read and write. They are rushing and grabbing grades without studying and learning. Sex for grades and money for grades are rampant at all levels today. Basically, people accept it as a normal phenomenon. Nothing is wrong with it. This is the most significant change negatively affecting the entire education system and our children. Liberia is at great danger.

- Government

Seven main themes emerged from the analysis of the responses of the different stakeholder groups to the key question on the most significant change:

- ✓ Free education provides ample opportunity for the poor
- ✓ Increased salaries are motivating and attracting qualified teachers to the classroom
- ✓ Direct deposit system has been very helpful to teachers but it encourages teacher absenteeism
- ✓ Qualifications of teachers shifting toward degree holders
- ✓ Recognition of improved curriculum and academic calendar, which will enable teachers to function better
- ✓ Slowness in decentralization implementation delaying transformative changes in the education sector at all levels
- ✓ Degradation in the teaching and learning environment due to rush for grades by students with no or little desire to study, which has corrupted their minds and behaviours.

2.3 Perceptions of Corruption Levels at the Ministry of Education

The issue of corruption appears at the national, county, district and school levels within the Liberian educational system. The persistence of corruption therefore constrains the effectiveness and efficiency of the broader education system in the country.

As mentioned above under the assessment methodology, we asked the relevant stakeholders what were their perception of corruption levels at the Ministry of Education. The options were not being corrupt or non-existent, low, moderate, fairly high, and high or extremely corrupt. Each answer was scored on a scale of zero to one as follows: 0, 0.25, 0.50, 0.75, and 1.0. If a respondent did not know, we simply did not count their answer.

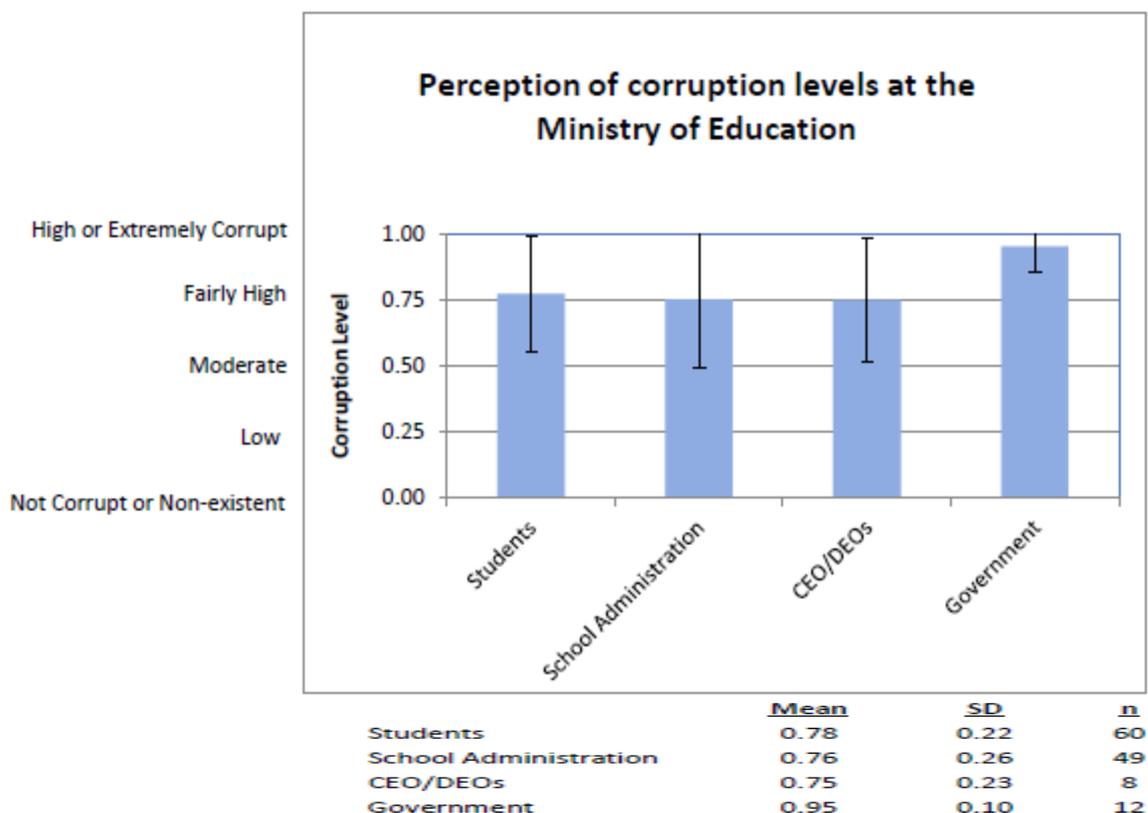
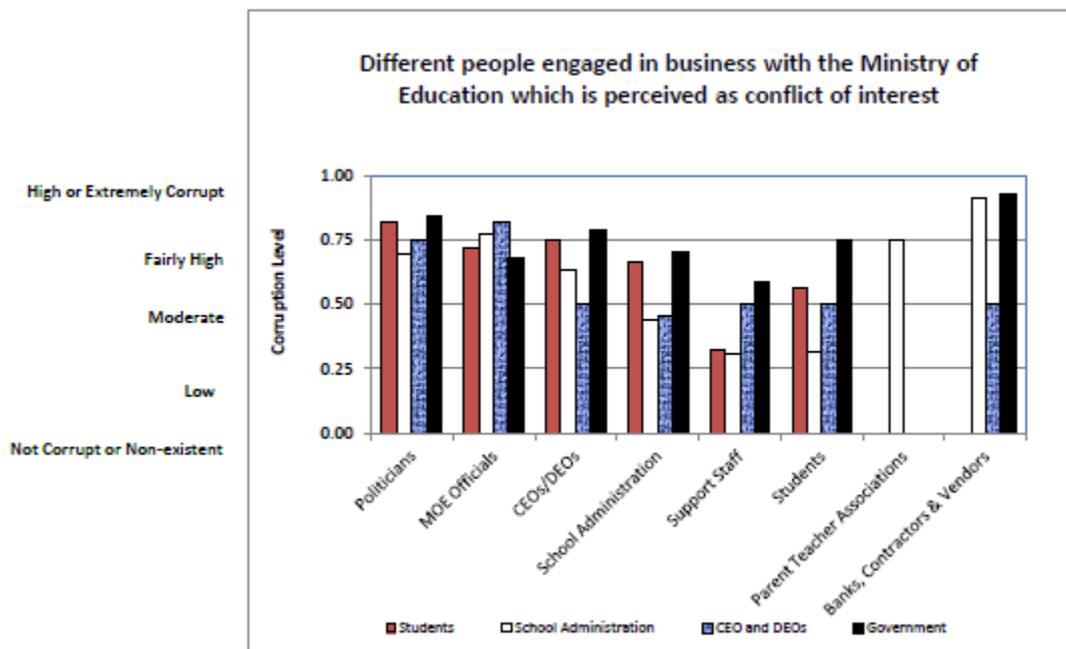


Figure 4. Perception of corruption levels at the Ministry of Education

Figure 4 above presents a breakdown of the four different stakeholder groups, where they all perceived MOE as a fairly high to high or extremely corrupt institution. The Government expressed the strongest unfavourable view that MOE is about 95 percent corrupt, while the CEO/DEOs, School Administration and Students averaged at 76 percent.

Figure 5 below illustrates a telling account on perceptions of the four stakeholder groups regarding the different people who are engaged in business with the MOE which is perceived as conflict of interest. All stakeholder groups expressed a slightly positive view of their own levels of corruption when they are doing business with the MOE. The Government expressed the highest negative views on the acts of corruption by contractors and vendors, politicians, CEO and DEOs, school administration and students. Both CEO/DEOs and school administration expressed an unfavourable view that MOE officials and politicians are engaged in fairly high corruption. School administration expressed exclusively that some Parent Teacher Associations are practicing fairly high corruption.

Although students were quick to acknowledge a moderate level of corruption, they were equally pessimistic about the risks of corruption among MOE officials, politicians, CEO/DEOs and school administration. All four stakeholder groups viewed support staff as contributing between slightly more than low to fairly higher than moderate levels of corruption.



	Mean	SD	n
Politicians	0.77	0.28	91
MOE Officials	0.74	0.23	104
CEOs/DEOs	0.70	0.28	93
School Administration	0.58	0.29	106
Support Staff	0.36	0.34	92
Students	0.50	0.32	99
Parent Teacher Associations	0.75	0.35	2
Banks, Contractors & Vendors	0.89	0.17	11

Figure 5. Different people engaged in business with the Ministry of Education

People are compromised by contractors through kickbacks. - Government

A former minister wanted to build a new office complex for the MOE rather than renovate old government buildings. He had talked to a contractor who was willing to build him a new compound as a part of the deal. - Government

2.4 Practices of Corruption by the Different Stakeholder Groups

The different stakeholder groups were asked about the largest contributing factors to corrupt practices at the MOE and at the schools assessed. As evidenced in Figure 6 below, the Government respondents agreed that greed and the lack of supervision and monitoring contributed 14 percent each to acts of corruption; followed by institutional culture and absence of clear procedures and practices at 12 percent each; low pay or salary, lack of logistics, lack of action against corrupt persons, and lack of administrative and financial systems and controls at 9 percent each. The Government stated also that both opportunities for corruption and poor work ethics accounted for 6 percent each.

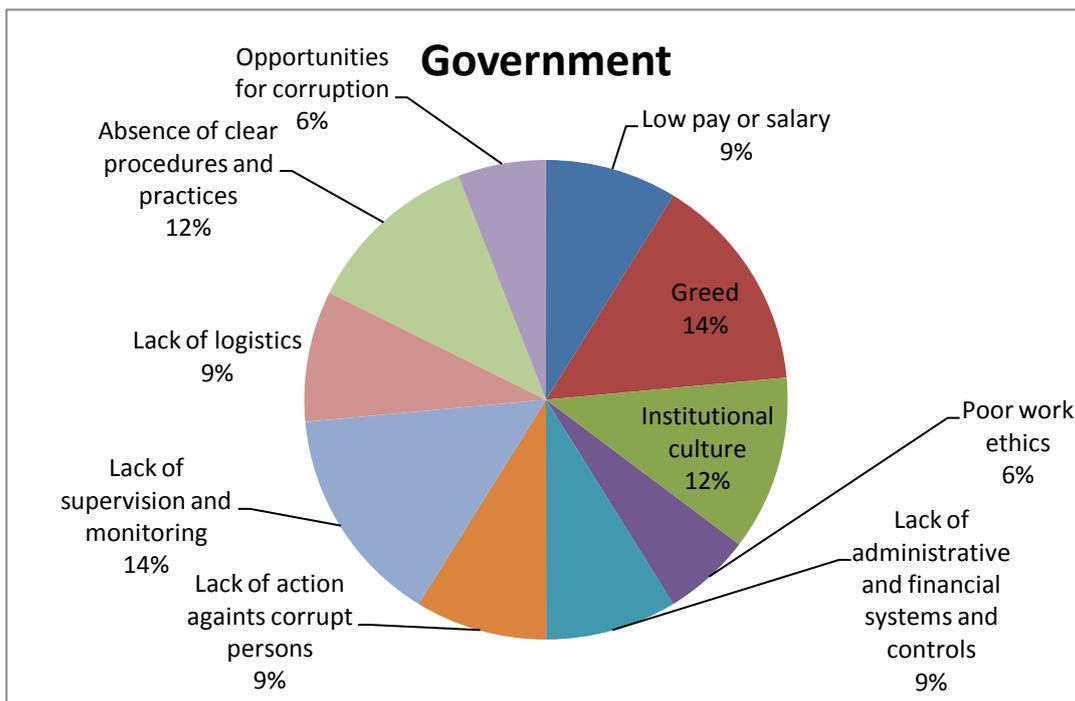


Figure 6. Expression of institutional factors to corruption by the Government

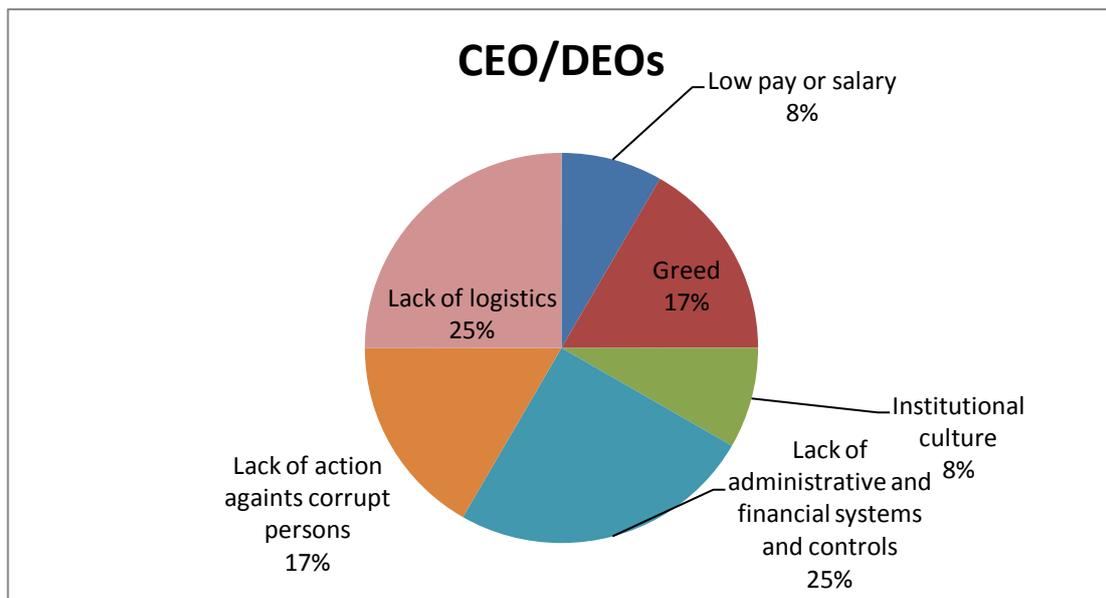


Figure 7. Expression of institutional factors to corruption by the CEO/DEOs

As shown in Figure 7 above, the CEO/DEOs respondents felt that the lack of logistics and lack of administrative and financial systems and controls accounted for 25 percent each to corrupt practices; followed by greed, and lack of action against corrupt persons at 17 percent each; low pay or salary, and institutional culture at 8 percent each. The CEO/DEOs expressed no direct views on poor work ethics, lack of monitoring and supervision, absence of clear procedures and policies, and opportunities for corruption.

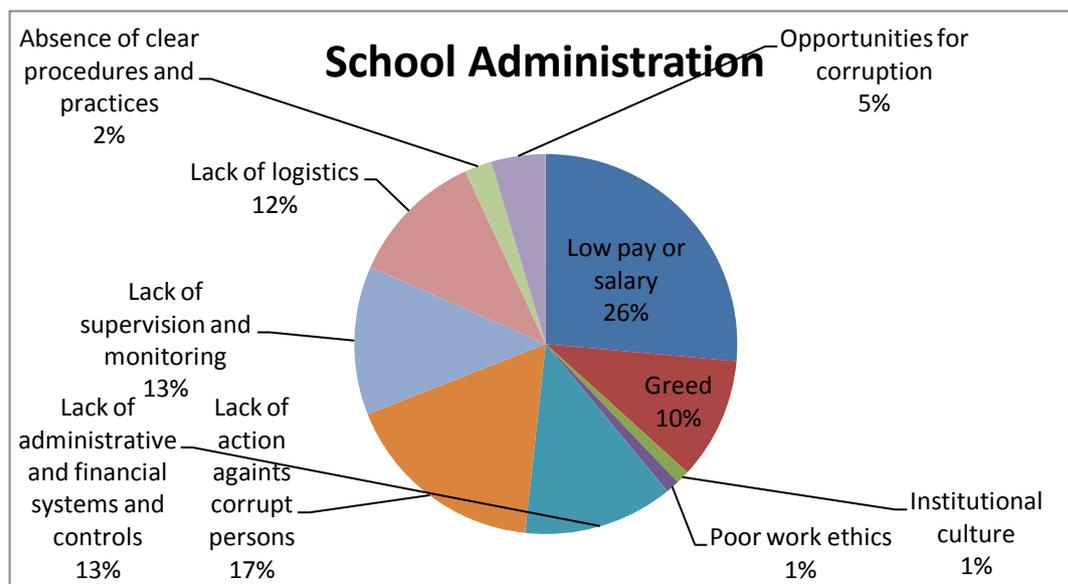


Figure 8. Expression of institutional factors to corruption by the School Administration

As evidenced in Figure 8 above, the school administration respondents viewed low pay or salary and lack of action against corrupt persons as contributing to corruption at 26 and 17 percent

respectively. This was followed by the lack of supervision and monitoring, and lack of administrative and financial systems and controls at 13 percent each. The lack of logistics accounted for 12 percent; greed at 10 percent; opportunities for corruption at 5 percent; absence of clear procedures and practices at 2 percent; institutional culture and poor work ethics at 1 percent each.

Figure 9 below represents a consolidation of all views expressed by the Government, CEO/DEOs and School Administration. These three stakeholder groups agreed that low pay or salary, and the lack of action against corrupt persons contribute to corruption at 20 and 15 percent respectively. This is followed closely by the lack of administrative and financial systems and controls at 13 percent, as well as greed, lack of logistics and lack of supervision and monitoring at 12 percent each. The absence of clear procedures and practices, and opportunities for corruption accounted for 5 percent each; institutional culture at 4 percent and poor work ethics at 2 percent.

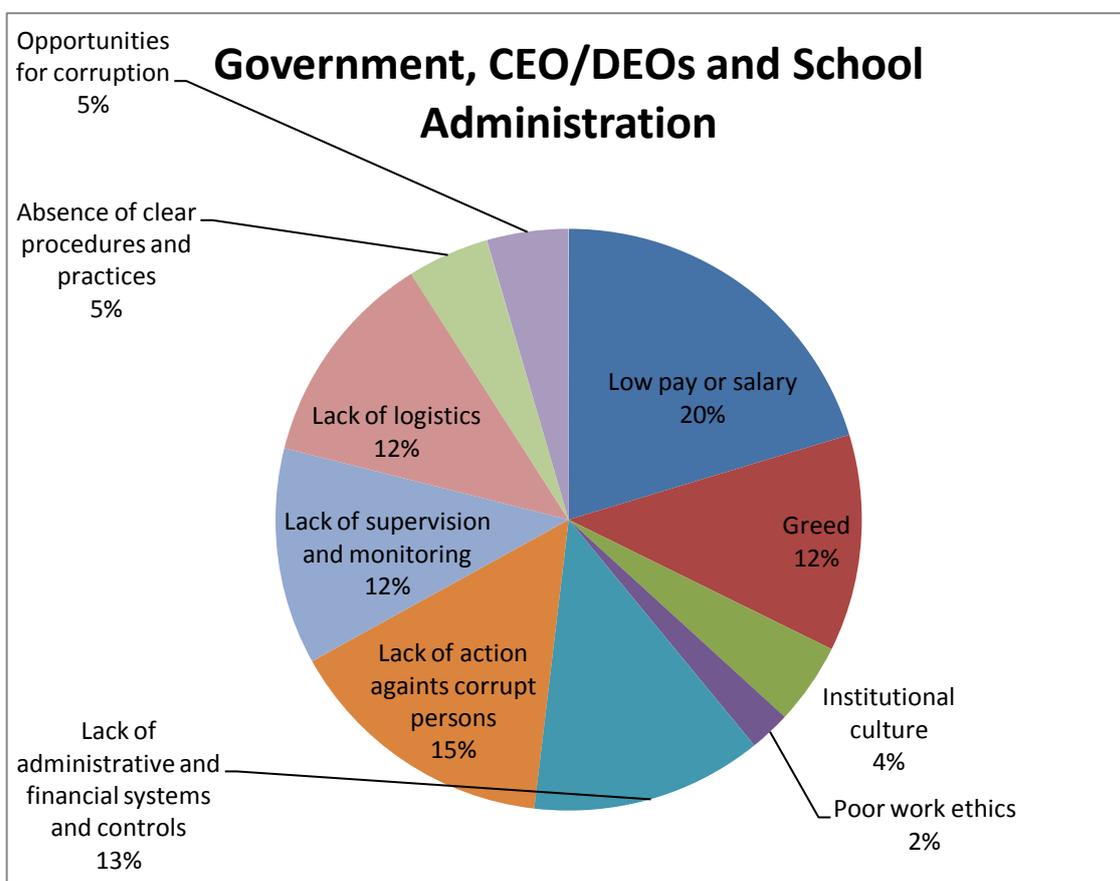


Figure 9. Consolidated views by the Government, CEO/DEOs and School Administration

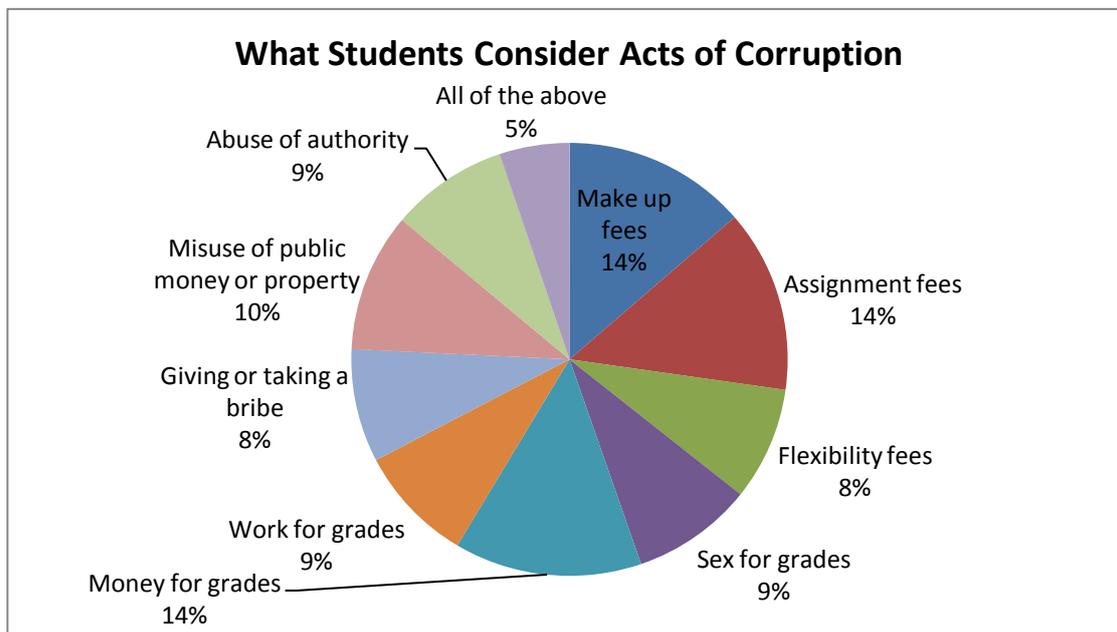


Figure 10. What students consider acts of corruption?

Figure 10 above represents a graphical illustration of what students consider acts of corruption in their schools. The students agreed that make up fees, assignment fees and money for grades accounted for 42 percent (14 percent each), while sex for grades, work for grades and the abuse of authority scored 27 percent (9 percent each). The students also expressed that the misuse of public money or property accounted for 10 percent, while flexibility fees, and giving or taking a bribe scored 8 percent each. Overall, all of the above accounted for 5 percent of corruption in their schools.

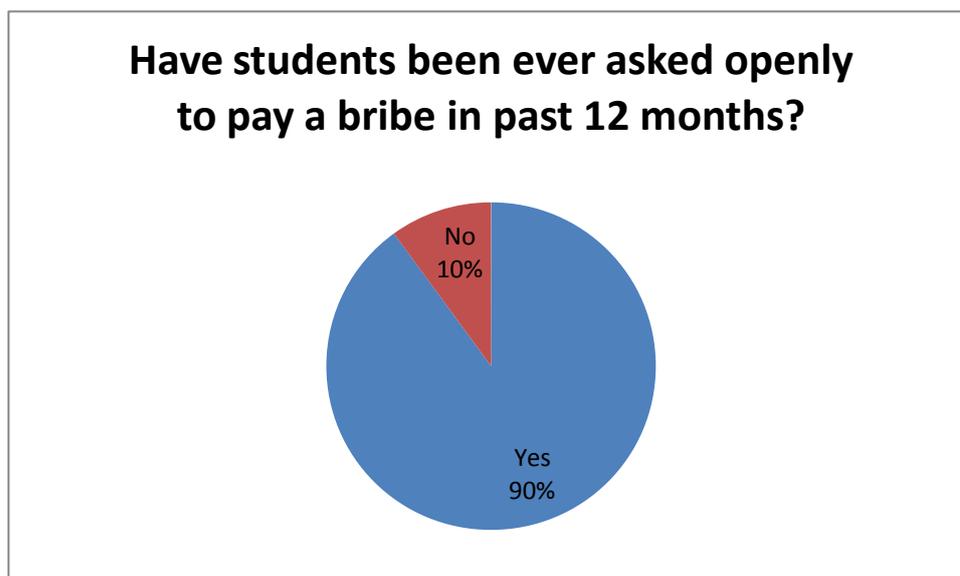


Figure 11. An overwhelming majority of students asked to pay bribes

Furthermore, we asked a totally open question whether the students have ever been told to pay a bribe in the past 12 months. Figure 11 above depicts that an overwhelming majority of student respondents answered yes (90 percent), while only 10 percent of them said no. In Figure 12, the students agreed that the most bribes were paid for good grades at 36 percent, promotion to higher grade at 27 percent, examination and testing at 23 percent. Certification or diploma, and favouritism and nepotism accounted for 9 and 5 percent respectively.

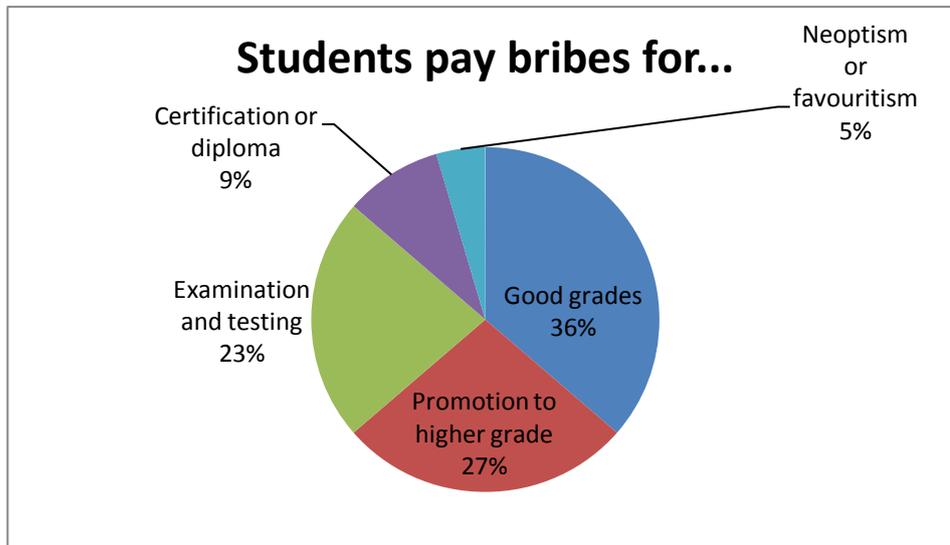


Figure 12. What students pay bribes for?

As shown in Figures 13 and 14 below, we further assessed the students regarding what bribes were actually paid and who did they give the bribes to. Money accounted for the lion’s share of what students actually paid at 60 percent, while sex and work contributed 20 percent each. Accordingly, these students paid the most bribes to teachers at 45 percent. This was followed by the registrar, and other students and friends in their schools at 15 percent each; the principal and support staff at 10 percent each, and vice principal at 5 percent.

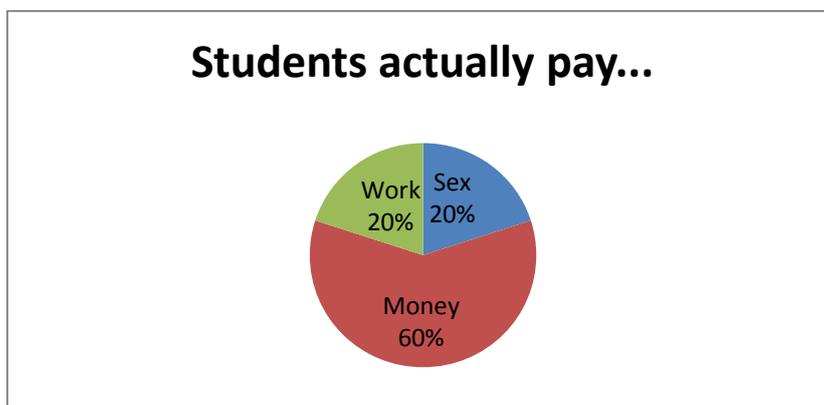


Figure 13. What bribes were actually paid by students?

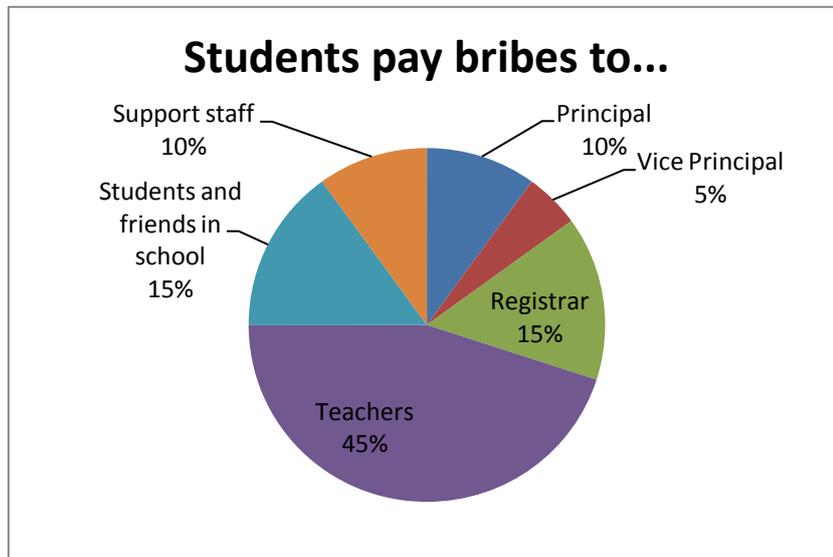


Figure 14. Who did the students give bribes to?

2.5 Rating Quality of Service Delivery

Figure 15 below presents how all stakeholders rated the MOE in terms of quality of service delivery in the education sector. Although 28 percent of stakeholders agreed that the MOE is performing satisfactorily, the largest majority of respondents strongly disagreed with a poor rating at 70 percent. On the other hand, only 2 percent of respondents rated the MOE as excellent.

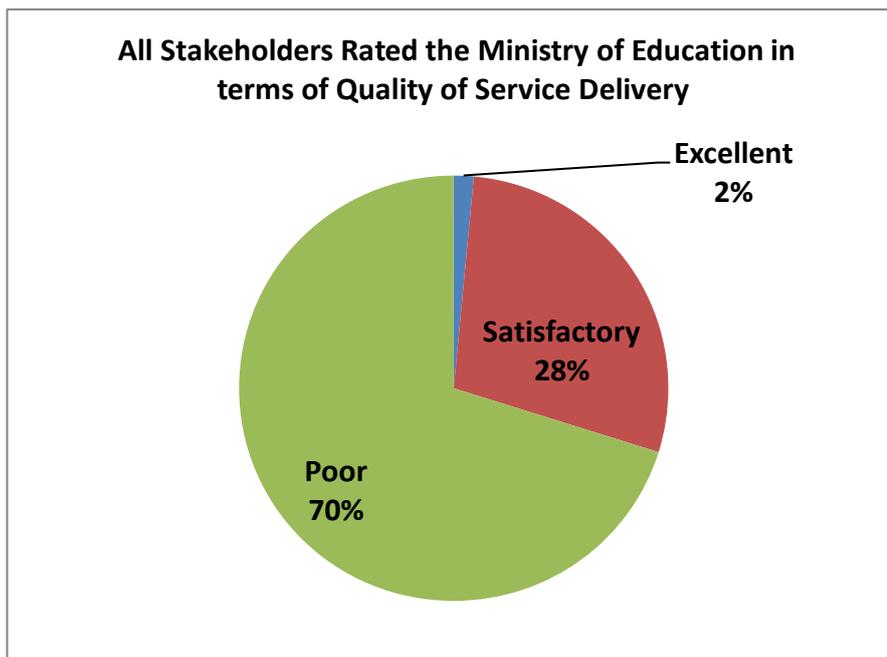


Figure 15. How did stakeholders rate the quality of service delivery by the MOE

We talk about free and compulsory education but there are no instructional materials or very minimum amount of supplies in the schools. Some schools do not receive anything at all.

- Government

I will be honest with you. Corruption was expected. There were things we saw every day. Textbooks were sold in the market place. People in charge were actually selling these books worth about US\$6 million. One assistant minister charged US\$400 to register a school. Classroom teachers were also taking money from students. Corruption is rampant at all levels.

- Government

When you visit the MOE, you will see lots of people with computers playing games. We are on the frontline, but we do not have anything. Students are also sitting on the floor. Most schools are poorly equipped and do not have essential learning environment for our children.

- CEO/DEOs

MOE has good planners but poor implementation.

- CEO/DEOs

3. Public Expenditure Tracking Surveys (PETS) in Education

3.1 Introduction

Our methodological approaches to understanding the phenomenon of corruption in education required a rigorous and systematic study of transactions and interactions between stakeholders including policy-makers, service providers, client-citizens, teachers, students and parents at all levels. As a result, the PETS are being employed to complement the in-depth qualitative and quantitative examination (*based on perception questionnaires for leadership and management, and students*) of major actors in the education sector in Montserrado County. This study has uncovered institutional factors and risks of corruption in education. Eventually, this process will help to identify weaknesses and strengths in education as well as the key lessons learned that may have broader, generic application in ensuring improved educational outcomes and targeted reforms in the country.

The PETS have been employed successfully in Uganda, Zambia, Peru and other countries to enhance knowledge and understanding of why public resources dedicated to education often produce unsatisfactory results.

Results from this study are intended to assist the MOE in decision-making and to improve management of the education sector as well as to integrate governance and corruption concerns in educational planning and administration.

3.2 School Administration

This section was focused specifically on identifying school principals and teachers, assessing their qualifications and years of service in education administration and the teaching profession. A total of 10 principals were interviewed: 9 men and 1 woman. Eight percent of principals were serving in their regular role as principals and 20 percent as acting principals. Figure 16 below depicts the

proportion of principals interviewed by gender, which is a graphical illustration of women under-representation in education administration.

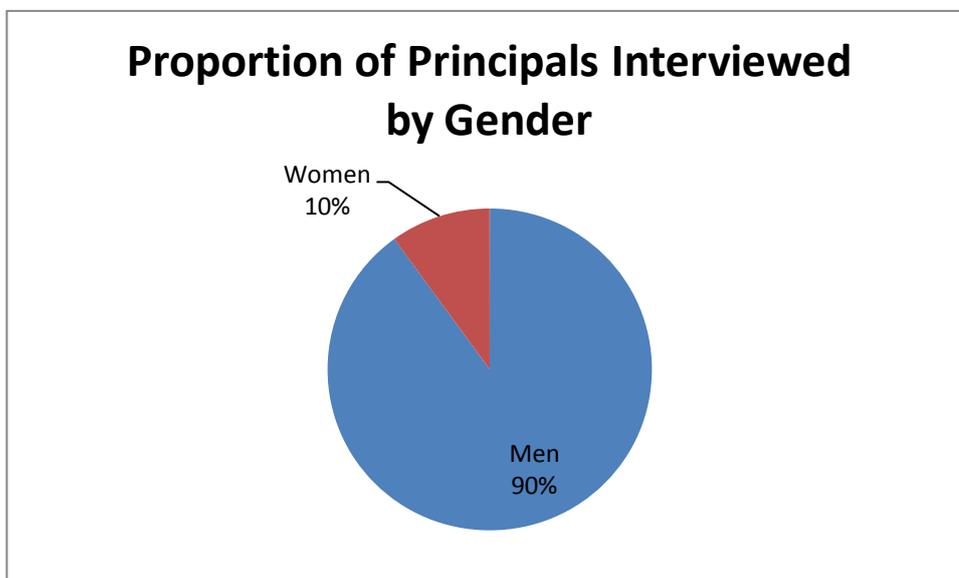


Figure 16. Proportion of principals interviewed by gender

Figures 17 and 18 below represent together a mixed picture on the highest levels of education and years of service of the different principals. The vast majority of principals hold either a bachelor's degree (70 percent) or master's degree (10 percent), while 20 percent have some college education. This gives confidence in terms of the academic background of our principals. On the other hand, this study also revealed that only 20 percent of principals bring 5 or more years of experience in the field of education administration as compared to 80 percent with five years and less. The current capacities of principals are complemented by long years of service in the teaching profession. At least 70 percent of principals are seasoned teachers.

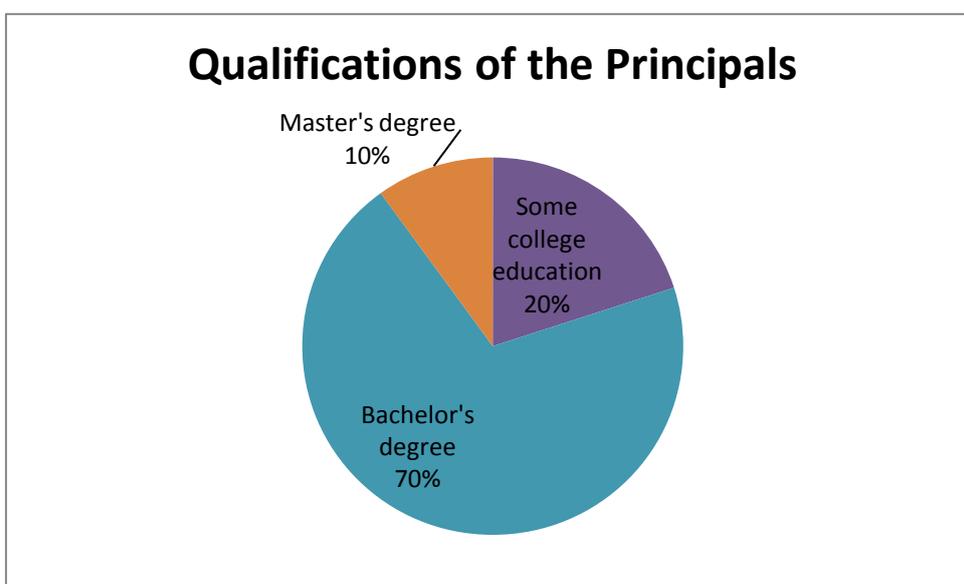


Figure 17. Qualifications of the Principals

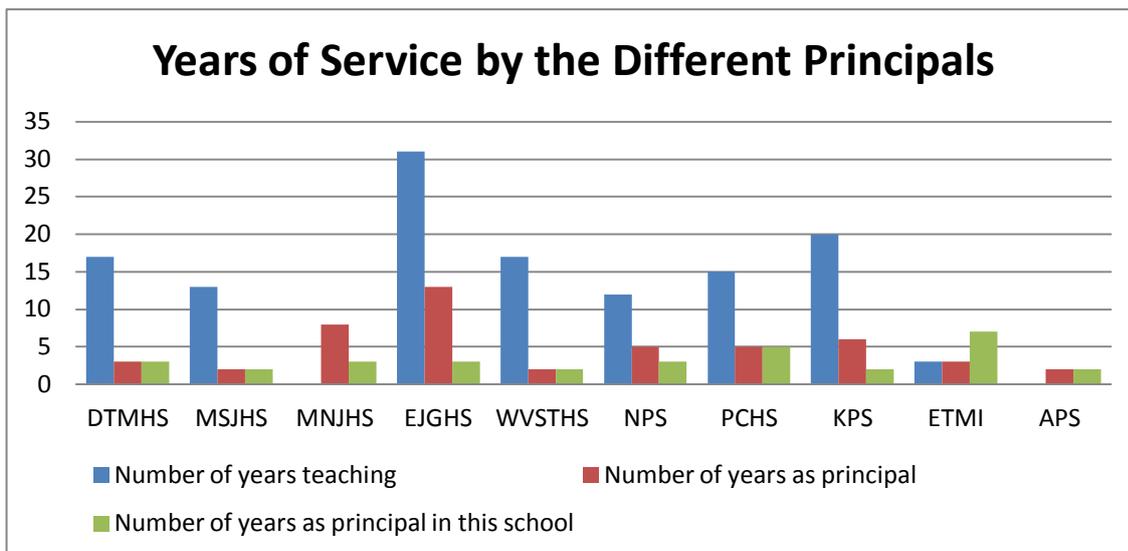


Figure 18. Years of service by the different principals

Furthermore, the number of teachers was identified in the ten schools. Figure 19 below shows that 355 teaching positions officially allocated, 321 official positions actually filled (90 percent) and 34 vacant positions (10 percent). Only 55 percent of teachers were present and teaching on the date of interview, while the remaining 45 percent were absent.

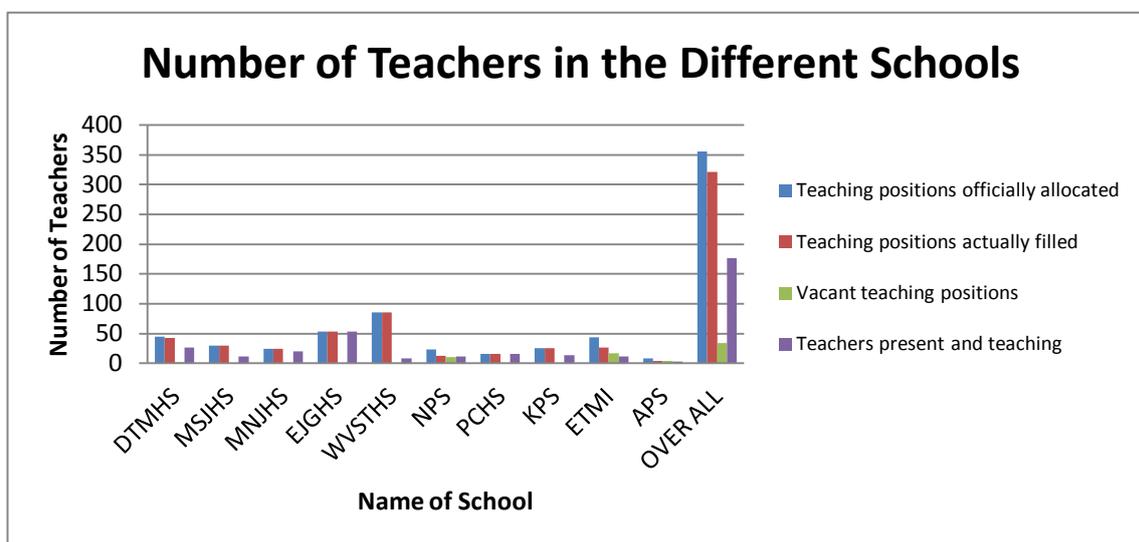


Figure 19. Number of teachers in the different schools

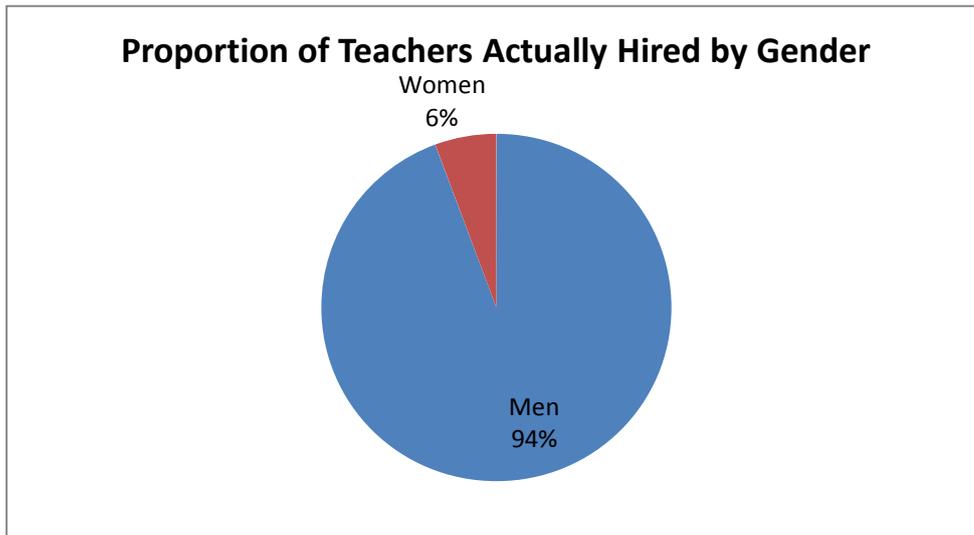


Figure 20. Proportion of teachers actually hired by gender

Figure 20 above presents the proportion of teachers by gender: men (94 percent) and women (6 percent). As shown in Figure 21 below, the study enabled us to gain more insights into the reasons teachers were absent. We were told that 37 percent of teachers were sick and 29 percent on approved leave. Fourteen percent gave no reasons, 12 percent living far distances, training and administrative duties at 4 percent each.

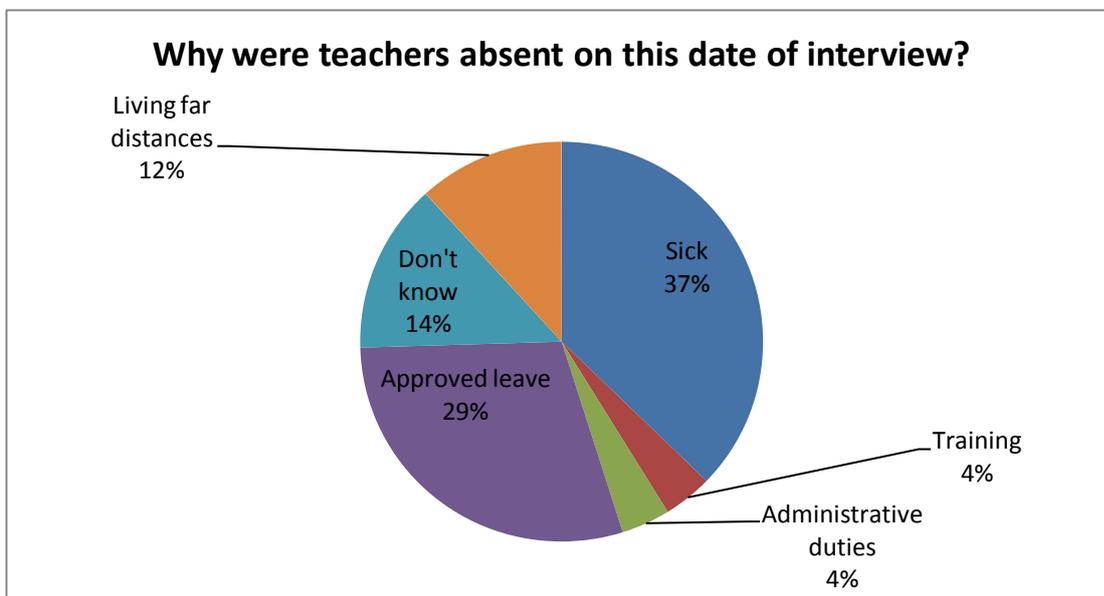


Figure 21. Why were teachers absent on the date of interview?

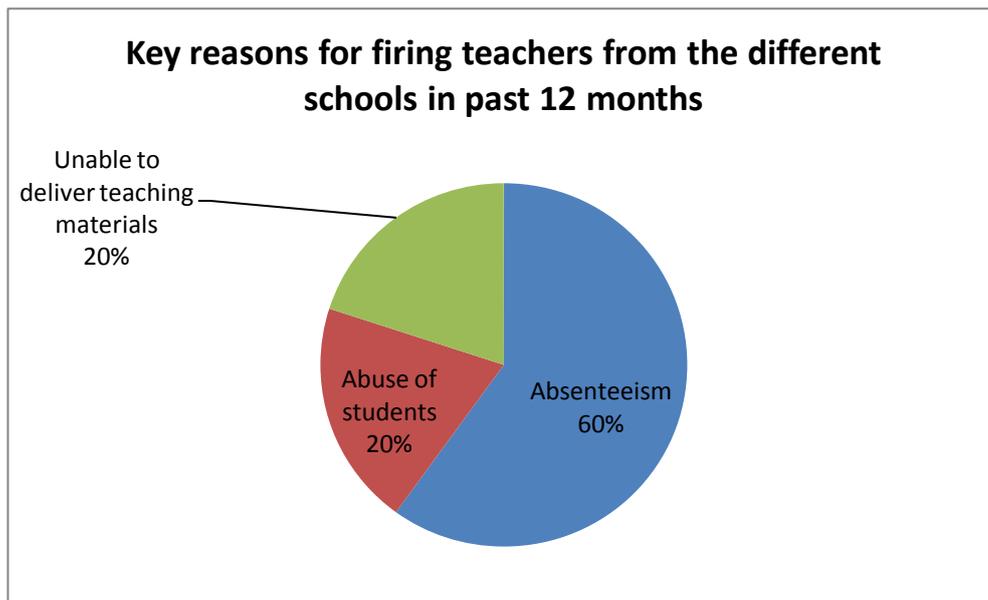


Figure 22. Key reasons for firing teachers in past 12 months

Figure 22 above represents responses on a follow up question whether teachers have been fired in the past 12 months and the three main reasons for firing them. Absenteeism ranked first at 60 percent, while the abuse of students and the inability or incompetence of teachers to deliver teaching materials ranked second at 20 percent each.

Moreover, the PETS provide unique techniques of statistical randomization in the selection of teachers for in-depth interviews from the different schools and at the different grade levels. The number of teachers interviewed was based on the number of teachers in each school. As a result, we chose randomly two *teachers* if the school had *less than ten teachers* altogether, *three teachers* if the school had between *ten and twenty teachers*, and *four teachers* if the school had *more than twenty teachers*.

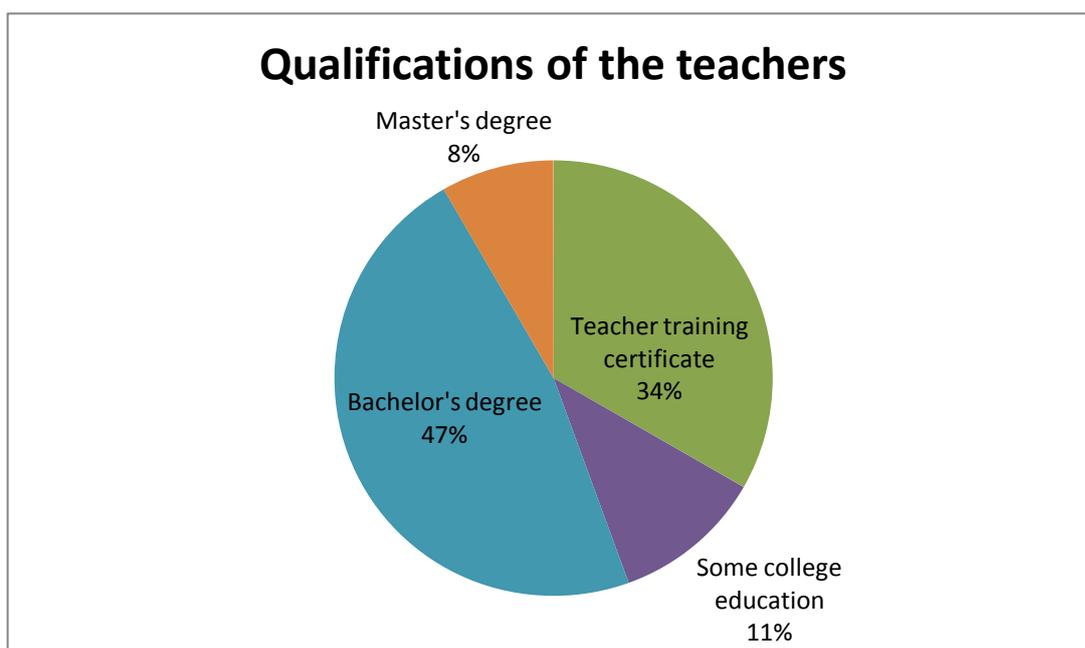


Figure 23. Qualifications of the teachers

These sampling techniques helped us to assess the qualifications of teachers and their average net income earned monthly. Figure 23 above shows that teachers comprised 47 percent of bachelor’s degree holders, 34 percent teacher training certificate, 11 percent some college education and 8 percent master’s degree.

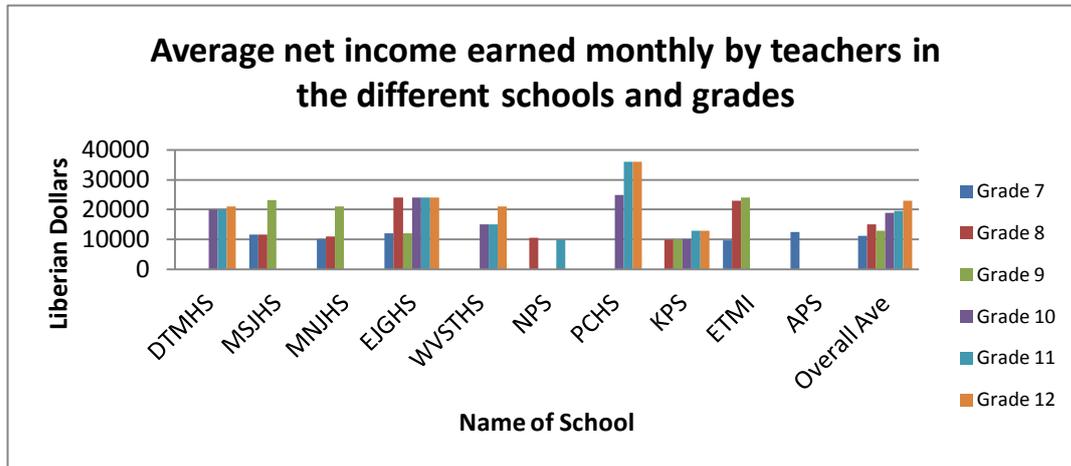


Figure 24. Average net income of teachers by the different schools and grades

Figure 24 above represents an uneven payment structure for teachers. In fact, the salaries of teachers varied greatly in the different schools and grades. On the average, teachers in higher grades make considerable higher incomes than teachers in lower grades. This is understandable and commendable. The average net incomes range between 11,258 LD (US\$161) and 23,000 LD (US\$328) monthly. But it is unclear why teachers teaching the same grades make far less than their colleagues in the different schools. We also observed that some teachers teaching lower grades make more money than some teachers in higher grades in the different schools.

As shown in Figure 25 below, 89 percent of teachers are paid by direct deposits as compared to 6 percent cash and 5 percent check. This shows that the commercial banking system is highly effective in transferring money from a general account to personal accounts.

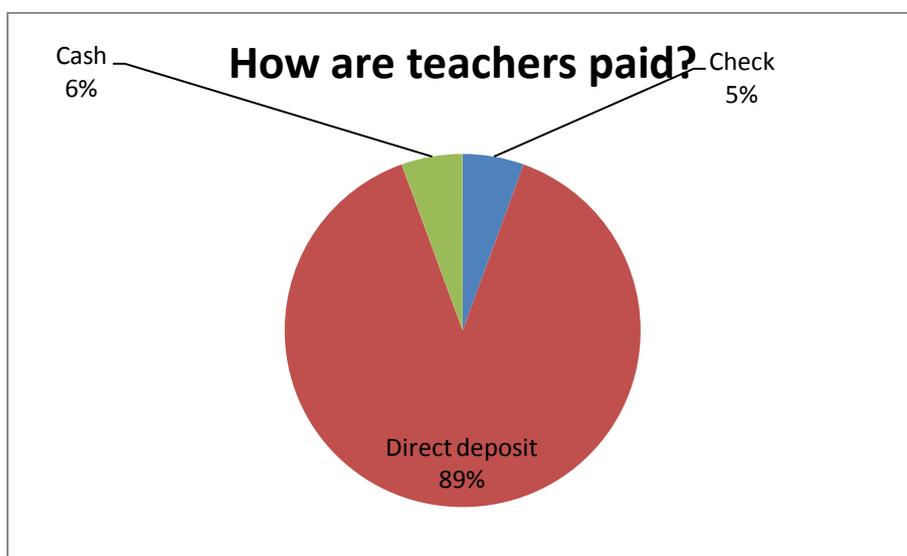


Figure 25. How are teachers paid?

The study further examined whether a teacher was able to support a family only on his/her salary as well as whether this teacher had another job outside of school. Only 25 percent of teachers agreed that they could support their families, while a huge majority of teachers (75 percent) disagreed. Only 22 percent of teachers agreed that they had another job elsewhere, although 78 percent disagreed.

3.3 Student Enrollment

As shown in Figure 26, a total of 7,660 students are enrolled in the different schools in 2012-2013. Nearly 98 percent of them attend urban-based schools in Monrovia and its environs as compared to rural communities such as Arthington and Todoë. Figure 26 below presents the proportion of overall student enrollment by gender: boys (58 percent) and girls (42 percent).

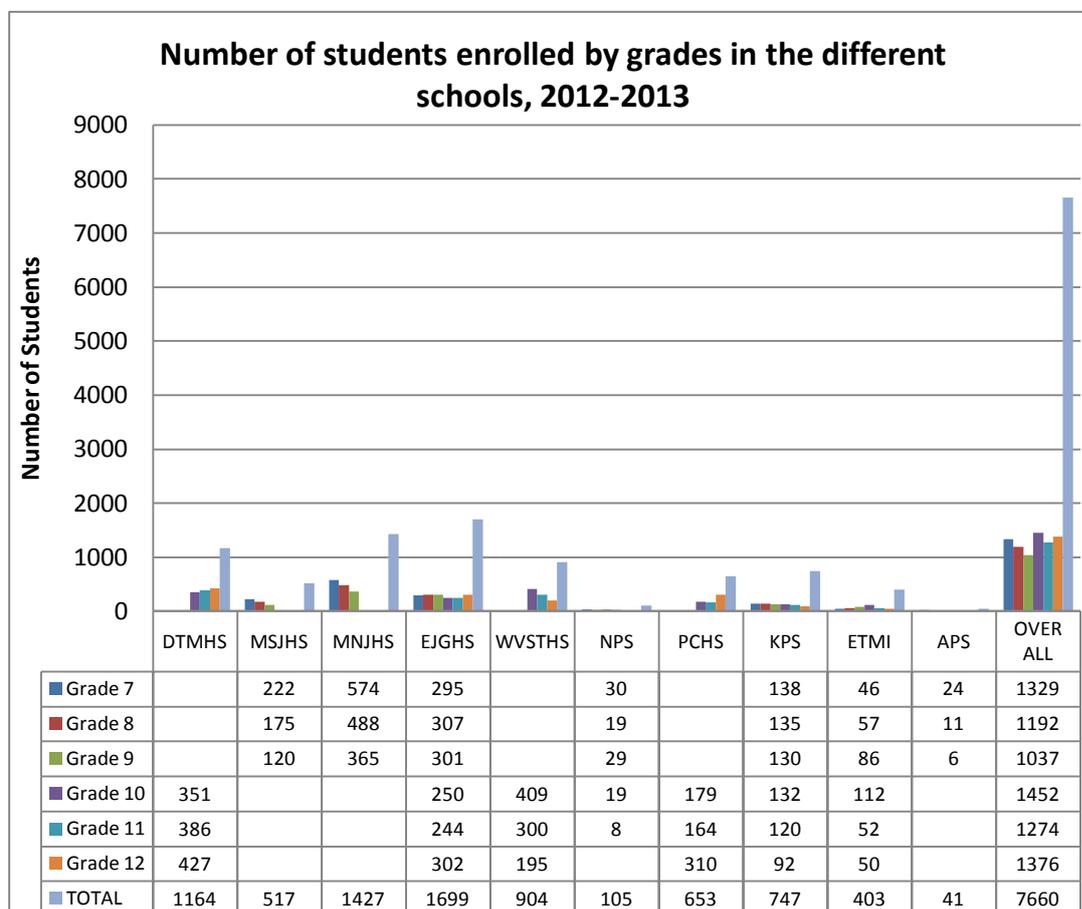


Figure 26. Number of students enrolled in the different schools and grades

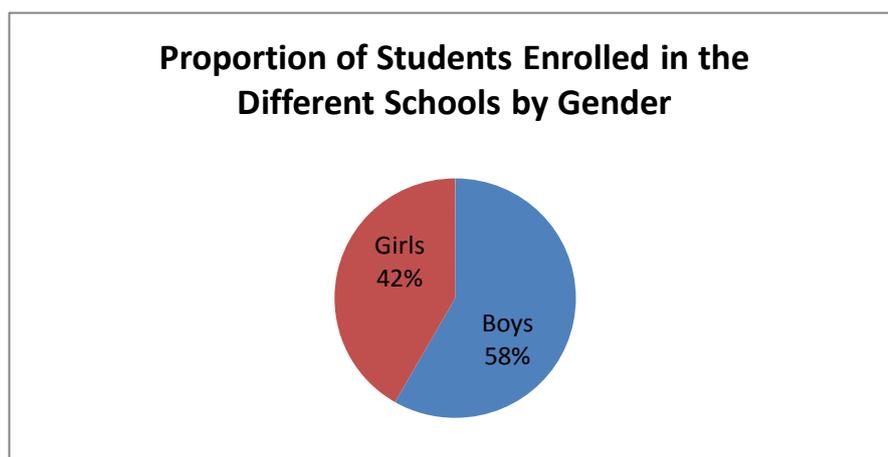


Figure 27. Proportion of students enrolled in the different schools by gender

3.4 Student Performance in WAEC

The academic data reported by the different schools indicated that a total of 1,813 students took the West African Examinations Council (WAEC) in 2011-2012. The student performance on the WAEC was 76 percent passing as compared to 24 percent failing. The proportion of passing students by gender was 63 percent boys and 37 percent girls. A total of 2083 students are also expected to take the WAEC in 2012-2013. Boys will account for 59 percent, while girls represent 41 percent.

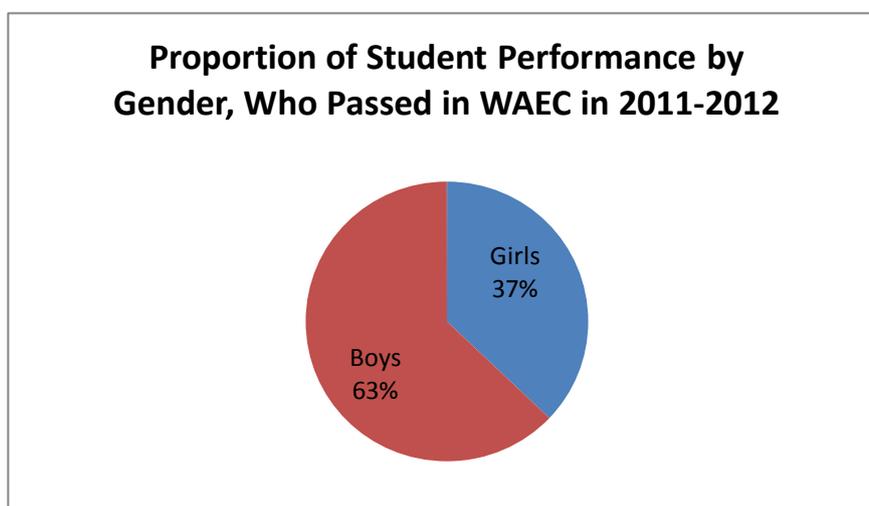


Figure 28. Proportion of students by gender who passed in WAEC in 2011-2012

3.5 Location, Distance and School Choice

The study revealed that location and distance greatly impact school choice decision by parents and students. Figure 29 shows that the common modes of transportation were pemo pemo (40 percent), walking (33 percent), car (20 percent) and bus (7 percent). Using a preferred transportation mode, Figure 30 represents the average distances (or times in hours and minutes) to the three nearest schools: 26 minutes, 24 minutes and 39 minutes.

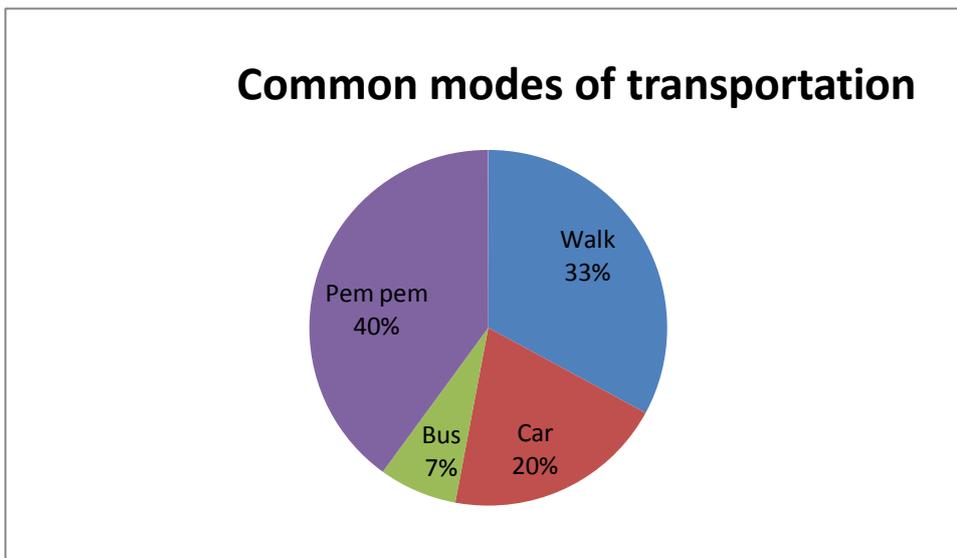


Figure 29. Common modes of transportation by students and teachers

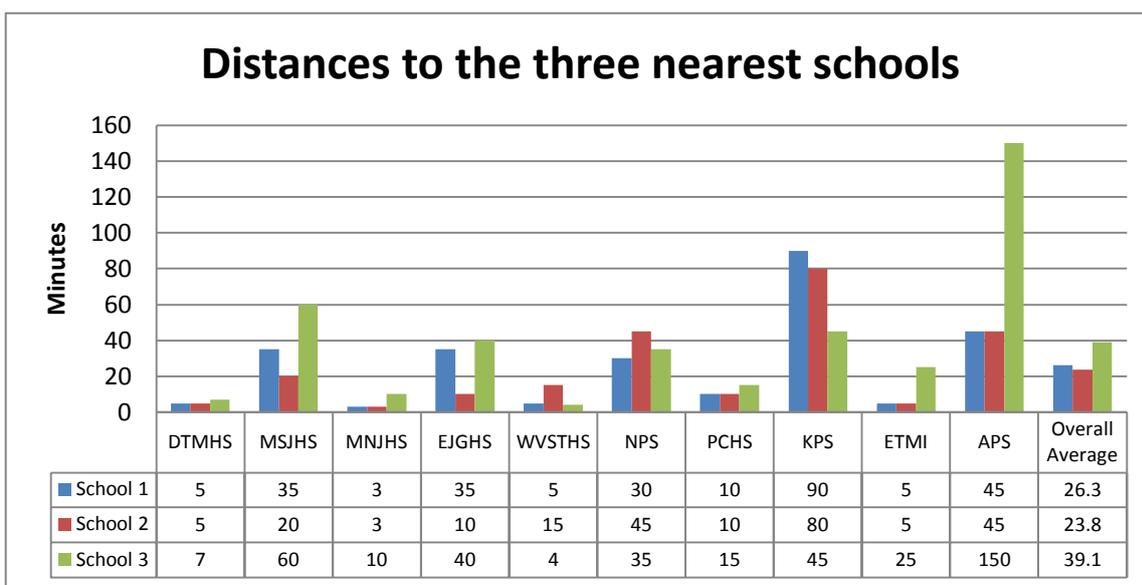


Figure 30. Distances to the nearest schools in hours and minutes

As evidenced in Figure 31, school choice decisions by parents and students are based mostly on cost (39 percent), academic reputation (33 percent) and proximity (22 percent). Only 6 percent depends on religious or ethnic affiliations with a particular school.

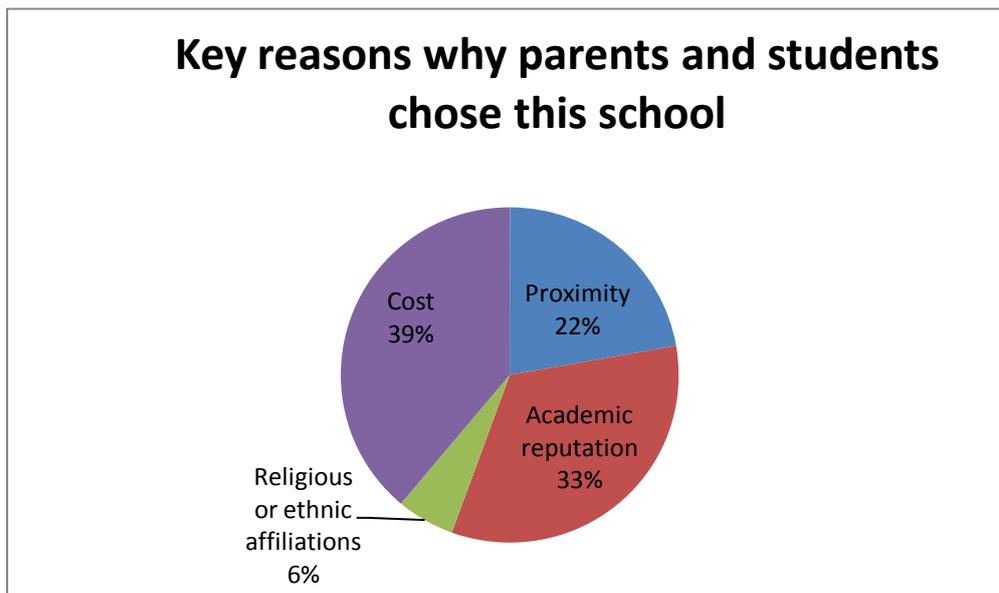


Figure 31. Key reasons for school choice by the parents and students

3.6 Physical Facilities

Land ownership is a key determinant factor for school ownership. The study revealed that 70 percent of schools are established on land owned by the state, community (20 percent) and customary land (10 percent). We further determined that 80 percent of schools were built with concrete blocks, cement and zinc roofing, while the remaining 20 percent used other local materials. The main sources of drinking water were well, bore hole and hand pump (60 percent) and pipe borne water (10 percent) as compared to students buying material water in 30 percent of the schools. Only 40 percent of schools provide computer training programs. On the contrary, a complete lack of electricity or prolonged power shortage greatly hinders the ability of schools to use and train students on the very limited amount of computers available.

Only 60 percent of schools have a science lab (*without essential equipment*), library or reading room (80 percent), staff room (40 percent), kitchen or cafeteria (60 percent), toilets in good working condition for students and teachers. All schools have separate toilets for girls and boys. Only 10 percent of schools receive a daily newspaper as compared to 90 percent without access to local newspapers. Only 10 percent of schools provide free lunch for students, 80 percent buy their own lunch and the remaining 10 percent survive by without lunch or other means. Although 50 percent of schools are secured yards by wall or fence, the remaining 50 percent do not. We were informed that this severely inhibits the ability of school administration to control the movement of students and visitors during school hours. Overall, we estimated a total of 7725 books (*mostly outdated*) and less than 50 computers. Both the quantity of books and computers are quite negligible when compared to about 7660 students in the different schools.

3.7 Supervision and Accountability

Figures 32 and 33 below indicate the number of official visits and inspections to the different schools in recent years. Overall, the official visitations averaged slightly more than 5 in 2011-2012, while there are so far slightly more than 4 visits in 2012-2013. Similarly, the official inspections

were 3 in 2011-2012 and slightly less than 3 in 2012-2013. The main purpose of the inspector’s visit was regular inspection (90 percent) compared with 10 percent for advisory inspection. One possible explanation for the very small numbers of visitations and inspections to the different school is likely the most difficult challenge in the provision of logistics and transportation for the CEO/DEOs and other inspectors from the MOE.

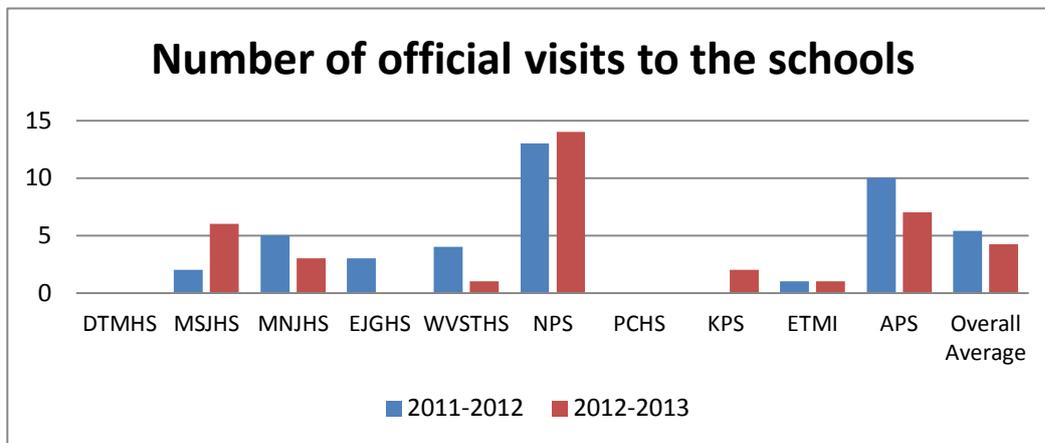


Figure 32. Number of official visits to the different schools

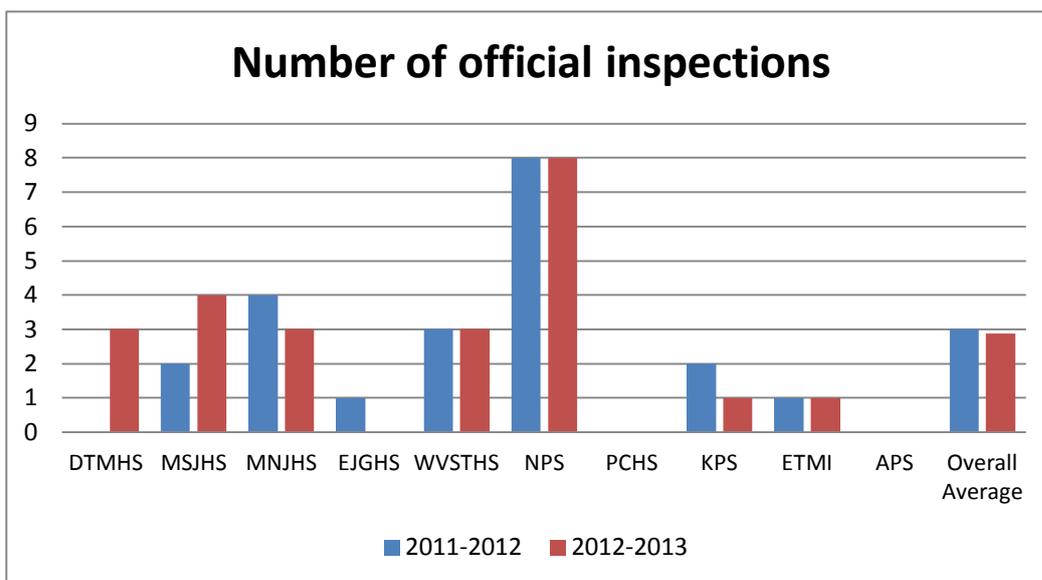


Figure 33. Number of official inspections to the different schools

We were informed that the inspectors often met with the principals and teachers. They also observed classes, checked school records and engaged some parents and the community. On the other hand, the study revealed that these inspectors provided no feedback or report to school at all (10 percent), verbal report to the principals (50 percent), written report to principals (10 percent), and verbal report at staff meeting (20 percent). Most school administrations do not get any written monitoring report from the MOE.

3.8 Governance and Organization

Only the four MCSS-managed schools have an active Board of Directors which is responsible for policy making, strategic direction and oversight of the effective and efficient operations of their schools. The current Board has eleven members including the superintendent of MCSS, parent representatives, community leaders and teachers. The Board held twelve meetings during the 2011-2012 academic year, and four meetings so far in 2012-2013. On the other hand, the six MOE-managed schools do not currently have an active Board of Directors. As a result, governance and management issues are left to the discretion of the school administration, especially the Principal. All schools have organized Parent Teacher Associations. But most PTAs are not fully active and do not make important decisions regarding the running of the various schools. The study revealed that a local board of directors is vital for the governance and management of all local schools.

3.9 Education Budget and Expenditure

Figure 34 and Table 1 below present a clear picture of the relative significance of the ten different schools, as measured by the total education expenditure during the academic years 2011-2012 and 2012-2013. Accordingly, the total amount of USD\$45,555 was unaccounted for as evidenced from the records of the schools.

The four MCSS-managed public schools spent about 92 percent of overall education expenditure. The Dwe Tweh High School accounted for the lion’s share of overall education expenditure at 32.1 percent, while the William V. S. Tubman High School scored the second place with 23.7 percent. The Marvii Sonii Junior High School and Matilda Newport Junior High School followed at 18.7 and 17.6 percent respectively. In comparison, a very little amount at roughly 8 percent was spent on the remaining six MOE-managed public schools. This amount was raised without any GOL support and the schools depended heavily on student levies and fees, PTA fees as well as small financial contributions from Donors/NGOs/Religious groups and other sources.

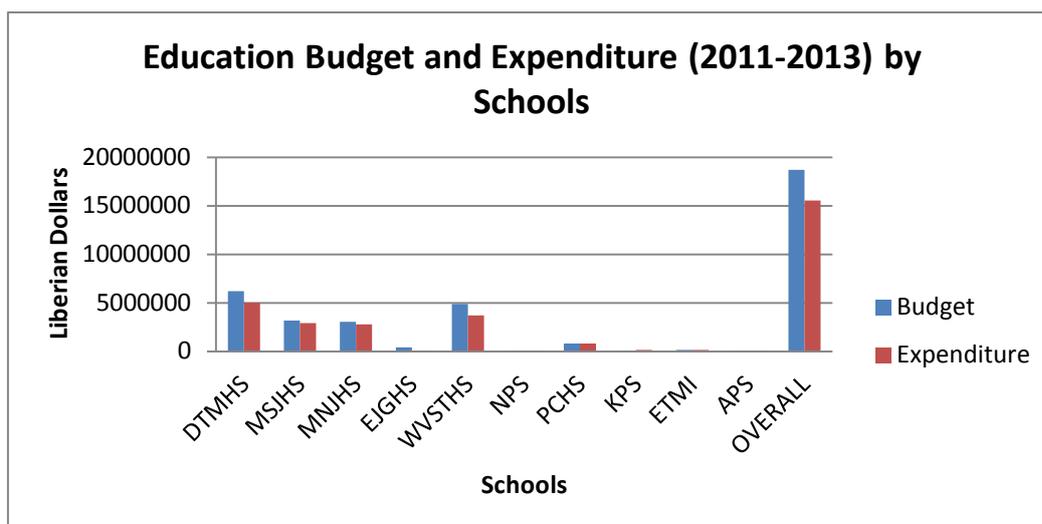


Figure 34. Education budget and expenditure (2011-2013) by school

Table 1. Relative importance of the different schools in terms of total expenditure

School	Expenditure (2011-2013)	Percent of total education expenditure
DTMHS	4994000	32.1%
MSJHS	2911150	18.7%
MNJHS	2741100	17.6%
EJGHS	72000	0.5%
WVSTHS	3689850	23.7%
NPS	28000	0.2%
PCHS	813600	5.2%
KPS	162320	1.0%
ETMI	116555	0.8%
APS	9525	0.1%
GRAND TOTAL	15538100	100.0%

Figure 35 illustrates the evolution of education expenditure by the different schools. Expenditures of the four MCSS-managed schools grew for the two academic years between 2011-2012 and 2012-2013. The expenditures of the remaining six MOE-managed schools were virtually unnoticeable or insignificant.

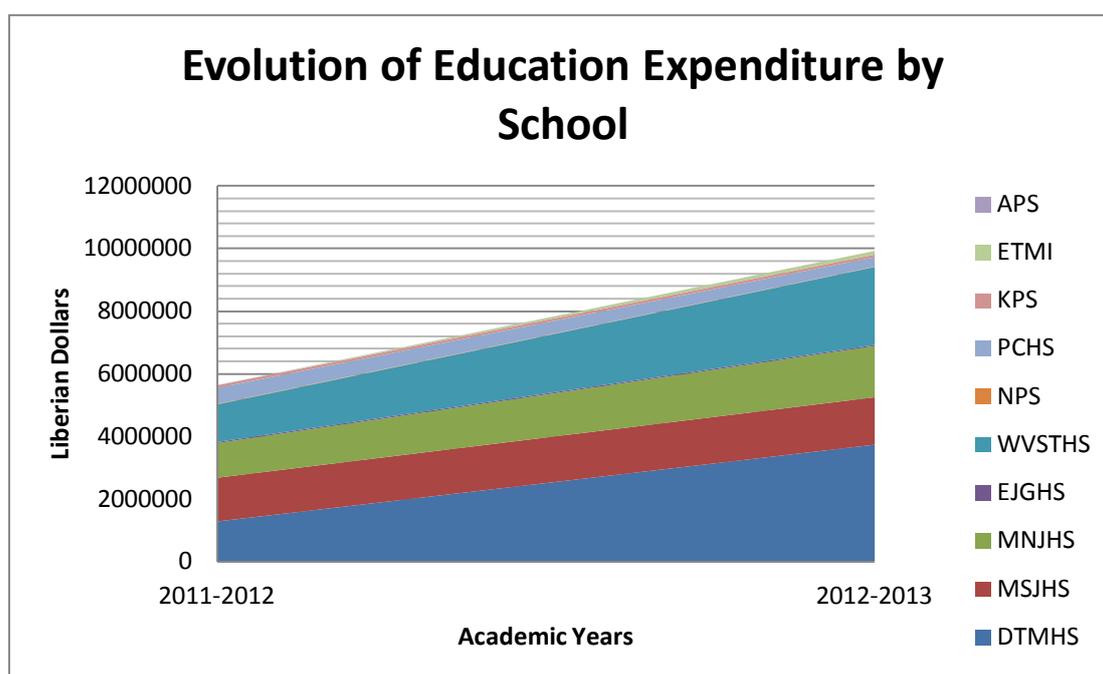


Figure 35. Evolution of education expenditure by school

A grand total of about 19 million LD was spent on the ten different schools between 2011-2012 and 2012-2013. The annual average was 9.4 million LD (see **Table 2 and Annex 2**). Table 2 and Figure 36 below also show that the annual education expenditure grew from roughly 7 million LD in 2011-2012 academic year to approximately 12 million LD in 2012-2013.

Table 2. Evolution of overall education expenditure

Funding Source	2011-2012	2012-2013	TOTAL	Annual Average
MOE	0	0	0	0
Through MCSS	4823000	9762060	14585060	7292530
Student Levies & Fees	760810	1289805	2050615	1025308
PTA Fees	1153503	431050	1584553	792277
Donors/NGOs/Religious	16200	16200	32400	16200
Other Sources	150000	324350	474350	237175
GRAND TOTAL	6903513	11823465	18726978	9363489

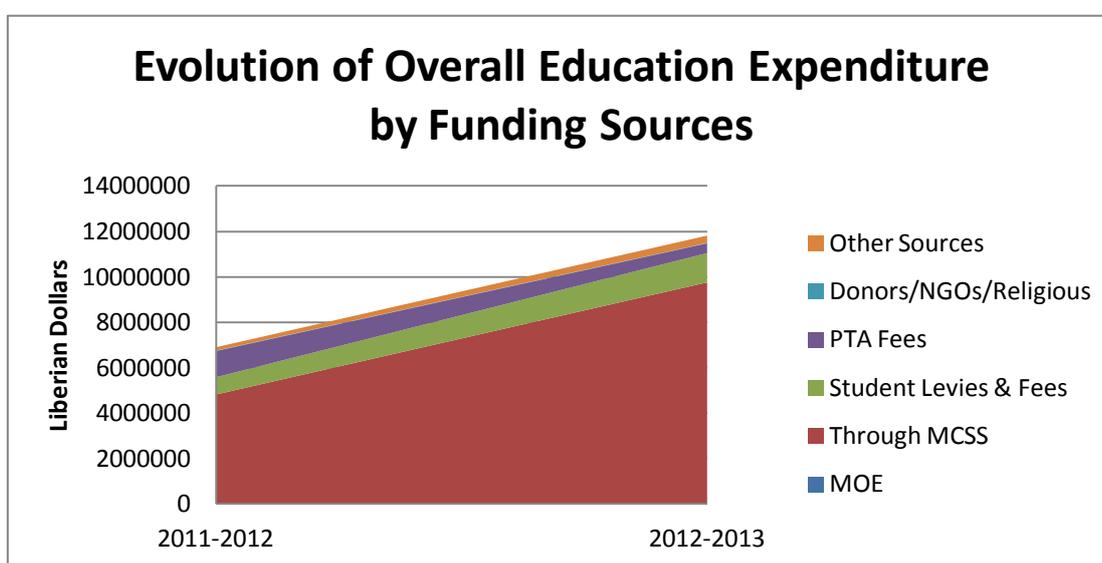


Figure 36. Evolution of overall education expenditure by the funding sources

Table 3 below illustrates that most of the MOE budgetary allocation goes to personnel compensation rather than education programming, instructional materials, monitoring and supervision of the schools. This presents a major challenge for the delivery of quality education in Liberia. For the period between 2010 and 2013, the MOE budget averaged 7.29 percent of the national budget. It ranged from 7.66 percent in 2010-2011, increased to 8.39 percent in 2011-2012 and then declined sharply to 5.81 percent in 2012-2013. Personnel compensation accounted for 72 percent as compared to 28 percent for goods and services, capital expenditure, and grants and subsidies in 2010-2011. Personnel compensation increased to 84 percent while goods and services, capital expenditure, and grants and subsidies accounted for 16 percent in 2011-2012. In 2012-2013, personnel compensation represented 83 percent as compared to 17 percent for goods services, and grants and subsidies.

Table 3. MOE Budgetary Allocation (2010-2013)

Description	2010-2011	2011-2012	2012-2013
Personnel Compensation	22,442,456 (72%)	36,246,691 (84%)	32,594,286 (83%)
Goods and Services	3,359,828	3,498,629	4,258,141
Capital Expenditure	4,265,197	811,038	0
Grants and Subsidies	1,204,399	2,767,820	2,213,068
Education Budget	31,271,880	43,324,178	39,065,495
National Budget	408,379,000	516,430,000	672,050,415
% of national budget	7.66%	8.39%	5.81%

Source: Government of Liberia

4. Strengths and Weaknesses

4.1 Strengths

First and foremost, the most significant strength of the education sector is that most teachers are still committed to teaching in the classroom. Some level of instruction is taking place at the various schools. As a consequence, schools remain open to students even amid most difficult challenges in the education sector in Liberia.

Second, the qualifications of teachers are improving along with increased salaries. We were told that the core middle level managers and technicians at MOE have also acquired and demonstrated good skills and vast experience because of their length of service.

Another major strength is that the policy framework to guide the MOE --- *education reform law, education sector plan, etc.* --- has been put in place. The MOE needs to be driven by practical implementation strategies and interventions in the education sector at all levels.

Finally, donors and development partners continue to provide huge technical assistance and support to help the government in improving the education sector and building infrastructure. The government must leverage this opportunity.

We have some trained teachers and good institutional presentation in our school.

- Students

There are more qualified teachers today than before.

- School Administration

Qualifications of teachers have improved. There are now teachers with bachelor's and master's degrees teaching in the classroom. Teacher training institutions are also improving.

- CEO/DEOs

Middle level managers are more competent than people at the top. People are becoming conscious of what skills are needed in the market place.

- Government

4.2 Weaknesses

The single most important weakness of the education sector is that all stakeholders agreed about the pervasive nature of corruption in the sector at all levels. Corruption steals from a people their very existence, national aspirations and potential. The MOE is viewed by all stakeholders as highly corrupt, while students are grabbing grades at all cost without a strong desire to study and learn the hard way nowadays. On the other hand, most students feel a sense of hopelessness in the face of an education system that has broken down and failed them to a large extent. The Liberian education system therefore needs total overhaul.

Second, very limited human capacity coupled with poor budgetary support has further weakened the education sector. We were informed that the MOE has no subject-matter experts. Education is also not a major priority in terms of government spending as evidenced by the proportion of education budgets to the national budgets between 2010 and 2013. Education budget increased from 7.6 percent of national budget in 2010-2011 to 8.4 percent in 2011-2012, and then declined

sharply to 5.8 percent in 2012-2013. As a consequence, essential logistics, equipment, text books, instructional materials, offices and other supplies are either totally lacking or severely limited to support local education officers and school administrations at almost all levels through the country.

Another major shortcoming is the inability of MOE to control the recruitment process of teachers and payroll system. We were told that people are being employed in the education sector based on myopic political, religious, ethnic and other considerations rather than proven track record of competence and relevant work experience in education management and school administration. As the MOE continues to deal with forces that are largely outside its control, the main focus must be on setting goals and objectives that will balance pragmatic strategies and interventions along with opportunities and constraints in a prudent manner. Otherwise, the situation will worsen and continue to hamper the MOE's limited capacity to address urgent education priorities at all levels in the future.

At the local school level, teachers are being hired at random. Although there are very limited qualified teachers in the school system, many are very discouraged because of poor salary structure which emphasizes academic credentials. Alternatively, teacher salary should be based only on subject-matter expertise and length of service in the teaching profession.

Poor supervision system, the lack of effective communication and reporting mechanism are major weaknesses in the education sector. All of these factors create serious disincentives for educators.

Students want good grades and some parents promote corruption that way. Parents often ask me to employ their grown-up children in their 30s and 40s without merit. That is corruption.

- Government

Take politics outside of education at all levels. Stop the finger pointing and resolve the real dangers faced in the education sector.

- Government

There is very poor work ethics in the education sector. People are not demonstrating their willingness to serve or work but they want to get pay. Most are interested in their daily bread and are not performing to expectations. MOE authority has to work hard to change that.

- Government

People are forced to work with a highly inefficient system. The employment of certain people because of certain affiliations has negatively affected the education sector.

- Government

A major problem with education is the weak supervision and monitoring system.

- CEO/DEOs

Administrators and teachers are very poor in their attendance in our schools.

- Students

5. Lessons Learned

We examined the major lessons that can be drawn on the experience from the education sector and that may have broader, more generic application. All of them have real implications for decentralization implementation in the education sector in the future.

A. Significance of holistic approach

A holistic approach to combating corruption is essential. You cannot succeed in the education sector without a holistic approach. Given the magnitude of our challenges, taking anti-corruption awareness campaign to schools alone will not work. First and foremost, the LACC must focus on prevention. Second, all strategic interventions must be linked directly to appropriate legal power to prosecute offenders for gross violations. To this end, we were told that the LACC must seek a public endorsement of the President for a national plan of action. The full cooperation and active participation of key stakeholders cannot be overemphasized. The Ministries of Education, Finance, Justice, Police, Civil Society, the Media, PTAs, students and the public at large must also be engaged in this fight against corruption in Liberia. An independent oversight body will be required to work in close collaboration with the LACC.

B. Threats to teaching and learning environment

Of great importance is the finding on how corruption undermines the quality of teaching and learning. Corruption, especially bribery issue, has a direct link to low standards in the schools. Students are willing to offer bribes, while school administrators, principally teachers, are very happy to accept the bribes. Although most citizens and their children are completely helpless, we were informed that the government has been ironically ineffective, toothless and doing nothing. This is a triple threat to the entire Liberian education system. No amount of planning and policy work will end this danger; only well-targeted no-nonsense measures and actions against corrupt persons will.

Because of the high rate of corruption, students cannot be serious to study. We are paying bribes just to pass. Please tell the MOE to give plenty money to teachers to help them so we can stop paying for grades.

- Students

We don't know if it is bribe or not. We don't think anything is wrong with it.

- Students

We don't report the bribery incidence because no actions will be taken against them. Our fear is that if we let the public to know, who will back us?

- Students

Bribery is very high in our schools today. Students are actually very much at the mercy of the school authority and teachers because reporting a bribery incidence will put us at more risks than offering the bribe. There is no one to protect us.

- Students

Teachers are not to encourage students by receiving gifts for their grades.

- School Administration

C. Civil Society, Gender and Youth

Another lesson is the importance of involving civil society organizations and in particular working together with women's and youth's groups in the fight against corruption. The study revealed that

women are grossly under-represented in both teaching profession and education administration. Corruption must therefore be seen in the larger context of human rights, but it must not be confined only to the work by the official government alone. The active participation and oversight of all citizens is key in achieving a major breakthrough in this initiative.

D. Unintended consequence due to effectiveness of the commercial bank system

The commercial banking system has been highly effective in transferring money from a general account to personal accounts. On the other hand, without first putting in place the proper administrative and financial systems and control mechanisms, the direct deposits are being used in facilitating the practices of corruption. **How?** This is a direct result of an unintended consequence of the education reform process in recent years. We were told that large numbers of teachers do collect their monthly salaries through direct deposits at the end of each month without going to work on a regular basis. As a result, absenteeism is very high amongst teachers today.

One of the most significant lessons from this experience is that one must first put in place sufficient safeguards against a corrupt system before instituting certain measures. Otherwise, if a particular source is corrupt, then the ultimate result will always be corrupt.

Banking direct deposit system has become a major problem for CEOs/DEOs. A large number of teachers do not go to the classroom anymore. Yet, they are able to take pay at the end of every month. CEOs/DEOs cannot do anything about it because the money gets deposited directly into individual accounts.

- CEO/DEOs

E. Monitoring and supervision

One important lesson from this experience is that the lack of knowledge and access to critical information at all levels breeds rampant corruption. The poor records keeping system makes it difficult, if not impossible, at the different levels of the education sector to enhance the quality of monitoring and supervision and reporting mechanism in a timely manner. Having quality record keeping system in place is absolutely vital for any realistic planning and project implementation as well as avoiding unnecessary delays. The currency of knowledge and access to reliable information is key in the fight against corruption.

F. Humility

All of the different stakeholders with whom we talked with and who were familiar with the numerous challenges in the education sector agreed unanimously that there is a serious problem with corruption at all levels. But we noticed that there was too much finger pointing or blaming others for the failure of the system rather than taking full responsibility on the part of the Government, CEO/DEOs, School Administration and Students. All stakeholders will do well to take full responsibility and practice an attitude of humility. This will go far in gaining their respect, support and collaboration of all Liberians.

6. Conclusions

The study confirms that corruption is an endemic problem in the education sector in Liberia. The Government, CEOs/DEOs and School Administration agreed jointly that the highest contributing factors to corruption are low salary, lack of action against corrupt persons, lack of administrative and financial systems, lack of supervision and monitoring, lack of logistics and greed. At the school level, students are motivated by the desire for good grades, promotion to higher grades, passing examinations, and getting certification and diploma. Most students expressed a sense of hopelessness in the face of current realities because they are at the mercy of teachers. No mechanism has been put in place for students to report acts of corruption in a safe and prudent manner.

As a consequence, the entire Liberian education system is at great danger. No amount of planning and policy work will end this danger unless there are well-targeted no-nonsense measures and actions against corrupt persons. Given the magnitude of our challenges, going to schools alone will not work. Although the main focus must be on prevention, the LACC needs appropriate legal power to prosecute offenders for gross violations. The LACC must engage key stakeholders including Ministries, Agencies and Commissions, the civil society, media and the citizens at large in this fight against corruption in Liberia. An independent oversight body will also be required to work in close collaboration with the LACC.

We conclude that these efforts will put the education system on the right path and create the basis for a strong, vibrant, educated and healthy citizenry in the future.

7. Recommendations

We make key strategic and operational recommendations to ensure the relevancy and usefulness of this report. Our recommendations are as following:

1. The MOE is operating a highly ineffective and inefficient education system. Over a long period, it is clear that administrative disorganization has resulted into managerial weaknesses at all levels. Thus, the MOE needs serious overhaul and realignment by putting the right people in the right positions with adequate resources. This organization reengineering should include hiring competent people with strong leadership and management skills in the education sector and hold them accountable. Ensure that all personnel from MOE central to the local school level have terms of reference.
2. All Liberians should make every effort to avoid favouritism or politicization of the education sector at all levels. The GOL should always recruit seasoned education leaders with proven track record and demonstrated experience in managing people, resources and planning. The MOE must employ people with core competencies and qualifications to lead the education sector at MOE central and local levels. The MOE authority must ensure that qualified persons are hired rather than people we know. This includes competent teachers, school administrators and CEOs/DEOs who are committed to improving the education system.
3. The GOL should increase budgetary support and commit more resources to the education sector in Liberia. All international conventions encourage developing countries like Liberia to put at least 25 percent of national budget to education for the long term. The education sector is the largest sector having direct impact on all citizens in a country followed by the health sector. Donors and development partners are likely to respond positively.

4. A major reason for high risks of corruption in the education is very limited knowledge and reliable information available at all levels. Every public school must establish an Education Bulletin in order to increase access to crucial information such as local school board decisions, school budget and expenditure, listing of teachers by grades and subjects, student enrolment, absenteeism, delinquency, school inspections and monitoring reports, etc. The MOE should also create a web portal for education management information system and disaggregate vital data at the national, county, district and school levels. Both the bulletin and web portal will promote accountability and transparency as well as share knowledge and information reliably in the education sector. The aim is to make critical information accessible at anytime and anywhere to all stakeholders including the GOL, CEOs/DEOs, principals, teachers, students, parents, community leaders, religious leaders, civil society organizations and the media. A law must therefore be established to prohibit the removal of any information from the web portal and Education Bulletin without written permission.
5. Although growing number of bachelor's and master's degree holders in the education sector is impressive, the real impact on education outcomes still remains elusive. As a result, employment and salary structure should not be based on academic credentials only. All teachers must first be tested and licensed to demonstrate core competencies on subject-matter expertise and relevant experience in order to teach in the Liberian classroom at all levels.
6. An autonomous commission should be established and mandated with the responsibilities of vetting, examination and testing, recruitment, placement and evaluation of principals and teachers for all public and private schools in Liberia. This commission must be required to establish international best-fitted practices and standards for principals and teachers. All persons must apply to sit and pass examination in subject-matter areas and then be licensed accordingly. All licensed teachers can declare their interest to work nationally, regionally or particular counties. This independent body will have a poll of qualified and licensed teachers. By so doing, all schools nationwide can then request for principals and teachers depending on their own administrative and instructional needs.
7. The MOE personnel's listing is obsolete, while the payroll system (*regular, retroactive, supplementary, vendor, etc.*) appears ad-hoc. A new listing should be created by county, education district and school. A unique combination of the web portal and Education Bulletin can be leveraged to publish and verify the personnel listing including CEOs/DEOs, school principals and teachers at all schools. It will provide ample opportunity to clean up the current payroll system and remove all ghost names. This new payroll system must be an open process that will serve as an accountability and integrity system to hold people responsible.
8. The MOE should establish a merit-based performance system to promote equal pay for equal work taking into consideration competence, relevant experience and length of service. Structural salaries and living allowance (*accommodation*) should be put in place to commensurate with qualification. In-service training program should be implemented for teachers.
9. The MOE should ensure that each and every child has a safe place to sit for learning in the classroom. The GOL should put in place policy offering scholarships to encourage and attract people in the field of education. Specific efforts should be made to train more female school administrators and teachers for public schools in the country.

10. Professional development plan should be developed to build the capacity of CEOs/DEOs, school principals and teachers. Training workshop must be conducted regularly for the MOE management and all staff at local levels. This should focus financial management, human resource development and orientation on what each person is going to do and what is expected from them.
11. In order to be more effective, the MOE should fully support and empower CEOs/DEOs with adequate logistics, office facilities, supplies, transportation and operational budget for proper field work, supervision and monitoring in the education sector.
12. Teachers and students expressed appreciation for instructional materials and school supplies. They plead for the GOL and development partners to do more in terms of school uniforms, science laboratory, library, computer skills training and technologies. Instructional materials should be provided at the beginning of each academic year.
13. An overwhelming majority of participants at the Assessment Validation Workshop agreed that the LACC and MOE should put in place the cooperation mechanism to implement all of the recommendations of this study. Participants also agreed that the scope of this assessment should be extended nationwide beyond Montserrado County.

Annex 1. Photographs



(L-R) Gladys K. Johnson (*Commissioner/Administration*), Joseph K. Acqui (*Vice Chair*), Cllr. Francis Johnson-Allison (*Executive Chairperson*), M. Osman Kanneh (*Commissioner/Enforcement*), Yvonne Wolo (*Programme Analyst UNDP*) and Varney A. Yengbeh, Jr. (*National Consultant*). (photo © David Yates)



Cllr. Francis Johnson-Allison (*Executive Chairperson/LACC*), Jeanet Sonpon-Sarsih (*Program Manager/LACC*), Cleophas O. Torori (*DRR/P UNDP*) and Marja Rudiomaki (*Councillor Democratic Governance /SIDA*) viewing presentation at the validation workshop. (photo © David Yates)



Yonton B. Kesselly (*Assistant Minister/MOE*) making a statement to participants at the validation workshop. (photo © David Yates)



The Validation Workshop Participants. (photo © Denna A. Kranley)



The Enumerators & National Consultant: L-R): Francois J. David, Hawa M. Williams, Fofee Sheriff, Actress Simbo, Gertrude B. N. Freeman, Ralph P. Williams, Abraham Sheriff, Varney A. Yengbeh, Jr., Andy Tugbah, Comfort S. Wotorson and Frances Fleming. (photo © Denna A. Kranley)



Key Stakeholders: County Education Officer, District Education Officers, Principals, Teachers and Student Leaders with the National Consultant. (photo © David Yates)