



A Cross Country Study on the Common Elements that Enhance Teachers' Motivation

Abstract

The goal of the study is to identify the key factors that enhance teacher motivation in five countries (Ghana, Kenya, Uganda, Ethiopia, and Malawi) where the Transformative Leadership programme is implemented. The study adopts a mixed-method approach involving a survey administration, Focus Group Discussions, and interviews. Findings from the study reveal that teachers' pay is the most significant motivation factor followed by teachers' love for teaching children. Female teachers show a greater intrinsic motivation than male teachers. The study does not find any differences in teacher motivation across urban and rural areas. Relevant recommendations towards the improvement of teacher motivation in Africa are made.

Study Background

This study is an output of the Mastercard Transformative Leadership programme. The transformative Leadership programme is currently implemented by Mastercard Foundation in collaboration with LEAP Africa. The programme is targeted at teachers in secondary schools in Five selected African countries (Ghana, Kenya, Uganda, Ethiopia, and Malawi). The overall aim of the programme is to equip Teacher mentors with the requisite knowledge and skills which will enable them to inspire their students (scholars) towards excellence. Being an education-focused project, it aims to generate policy evidence surrounding critical aspects of education in Africa such as teacher welfare and motivation. This research is focused on understanding the factors that influence teacher motivation in Africa. It is carried out in the five countries where the Transformative Leadership programme is being implemented.

Introduction

Teachers play a role in the quality of education in a society which in turn determines returns to education such as income, good behaviour and peaceful co-existence¹. It is therefore right to say that the role of a teacher has far-reaching consequences in a country.

However, teachers as other workers are sustained by motivation in the work environment ¹. As such, in the presence of good motivation teachers are encouraged to offer their best services in grooming learners to attain the requisite competence needed to become productive members of society. On the contrary, factors that demotivate teachers such as low pay, toxic work environment and heavy workload may constrain the commitment of teachers to learners, therefore, lowering the quality of learners that are produced.

In sub-Saharan Africa, teacher motivation has been reported to be at low ebbs. Teachers in the region work under terrible conditions such as low pay, absence of adequate training opportunities and general neglect by the government. Owing to such a deplorable state of teachers, it is therefore not surprising to find that African countries consistently lag in Global student rankings. It is therefore important to identify the factors responsible for teacher motivation as well as understand teacher motivation dynamics to tailor policy measures towards the improvement of teacher motivation as a step towards ensuring quality education in the region. In the light of the established context, it is therefore important to examine whether teacher motivation elements differ from one country to another.

¹ Bennell, P., & Akyeampong, K. (2007). *Teacher motivation in sub-Saharan Africa and south Asia* (Vol. 71). Londres: Department for international Development.

Literature Review

Defining Teacher Motivation

Teacher motivation refers to an individual's desire to teach and how they engage with students while teaching². Teacher motivation has also been defined as that which attracts persons to the teaching profession, how long they stay in the profession and how well they engage with the profession³. In the literature, teacher motivation can be categorized into two namely: external teacher motivation and intrinsic teacher motivation. An Intrinsically motivated teacher takes up a task for the satisfaction that is derived from doing it, while an externally motivated teacher takes up a task because of the reward attached to performing such a task⁴.

Teacher Motivation Across the World

A review of literature on studies carried out on teacher motivation around the world reveals that the nature of teacher motivation differs across developed and developing countries. While teacher motivation in developed countries is centered around the love of working with children, in developing countries it revolves around the level of pay.

Teacher motivation in Developed Countries

The study identifies some teacher motivation factors in United Kingdom⁵. They find that the major factor contributing to the job satisfaction of teachers is working with children. On the other hand, work overload, poor pay, and perception of teachers in the society were some demotivating factors. A major conclusion of the study which used a Heltzberg two-factor theory is that teacher motivation can be improved by an increase in pay, teacher autonomy, and more time working with children. Pay rates are not a major concern for teachers in the developed world. Owing to this, pay increases may not increase teacher motivation in developed countries as intrinsic motivation is a bigger incentive to teacher motivation⁶.

² Reeve, J., & Su, L. Teacher Motivation 21. *The Oxford Handbook of Work Engagement, Motivation, And Self-Determination Theory*, 349.

³ Sinclair, C. (2008). Initial And Changing Student Teacher Motivation and Commitment To Teaching. *Asia-Pacific Journal Of Teacher Education*, 36(2), 79-104.

⁴ Demir, K. (2011). Teachers' intrinsic And Extrinsic Motivation As Predictors Of Student Engagement: An Application Of Self-Determination Theory. *Education Sciences*, 6(2), 1397-1409.

⁵ Spear, M., Gould, K., & Lee, B. (2000). *Who Would Be A Teacher? A Review Of Factors Motivating And Demotivating Prospective And Practising Teachers*. Slough: Nfer.

⁶ Sylvia, R. D., & Hutchison, T. (1985). What Makes Ms. Johnson Teach? A Study of Teacher Motivation. *Human Relations*, 38(9), 841-856.

Teacher Motivation in Developing Countries

Not many studies have examined the state of teacher motivation in sub-Saharan Africa compared to the rest of the world. However, a common finding among the few studies carried out suggests that teacher motivation in sub-Saharan Africa is at its lowest.

For instance, a study on teacher motivation in three Sub-Saharan African countries (Malawi Zambia and Papua New Guinea) reports that the teaching workforce in this country is demoralized⁷. Some of the demotivating factors in the report include poor working relationships with the local community, poor working conditions, and lack of support from the educational authorities. Some challenges highlighted in the study include low salaries, poor management levels, insufficient learning materials, insufficient housing units, lack of representation in decision making.

According to Global Campaign for Education, there has not been much progress since the restating of the Education for All goals at Dakar as teacher welfare has not received the much-needed attention in national and international policymaking⁸. Owing to this, teacher motivation has declined significantly. Some reasons for the decline in motivation include poor teacher training, low pay, increase in workload.

In Asia, a study by EFA conducted in Pakistan revealed poor teacher motivation which was instigated by political interference. Furthermore, the study identified that poor teacher motivation manifests in the form of unprofessional conduct, a high rate of teacher absenteeism, poor commitment to teaching tasks, and little time devoted to extra-academic activities. The World Development report of 2004 reports that teachers come to work drunk, are abusive to learners, and do not attend to their duties. On the other hand, a few studies report contrasting studies of appreciable levels of teacher motivation in some developing countries. A study carried out in Ghana, found that teacher motivation was high with only 13 percent of the sample population of teachers indicating that they did not enjoy their job⁹. Another study focusing on Mozambique, Tanzania, Kenya, and Uganda find that teacher morale is high¹⁰.

⁷ Voluntary Service Overseas (VSO). (2002). *What makes teachers tick? A policy research report on teachers' motivation in developing countries.*

⁸ Global Campaign for Education. (2005). *Teachers for All: What Governments and Donors should do?* Cape Town:GCE

⁹ Acheampong, A. (2003). Ghana study World Bank report.

¹⁰ Carr-Hill, R., & Peart, E. (2003). *Understanding the impact of HIV/AIDS on education systems in selected Eastern and Southern African Countries.* London: Department for International Development.

Theoretical Framework

This study draws on two motivation theories- the Needs theory and the Motivation-hygiene theory. The Hierarchical needs Theory was developed by Abraham Maslow (1943). According to Maslow employee motivation increases as their needs are met. The needs theory identifies five needs that are in a hierarchy which entails that employee needs change over time including more categories of needs. The Five needs are listed in their hierarchy (from the basic to the highest): physiological needs (for example food and clothing), safety (job security), love and belonging, esteem, and self-actualization.

This theory can be related to the teaching profession as teachers have needs and will perform at an optimum level should their needs be met in course of their job engagement.

The Motivation-hygiene theory was developed by Herzberg (1966). According to Herzberg (1966), intrinsic and extrinsic factors contribute to the motivation of workers. Intrinsic motivation factors include responsibility and fulfilment while external factors include salary, fringe benefits, working environment. Furthermore, Herzberg (1966) argues that intrinsic factors have a positive effect on employee motivation while low-quality extrinsic factors could lead to a negative effect on the motivation of employees.

In Africa, it is often the case that some teachers love the job primarily for its responsibility in equipping young people in the community. Very often such teachers sustain their motivation even in the most unpleasant external working conditions such as low pay and high workload. Nevertheless, the role of external factors cannot be overlooked as they also play a key role in determining the level of teacher motivation. Teachers in various African countries have taken to industrial action over low pay and poor working conditions.

Research Methodology

This study uses a mixed-method approach-quantitative and qualitative methods. The use of both methods avoids the bias that arises in the use of only one. For instance, while the quantitative approach links one variable to another. The qualitative approach offers a detailed explanation while the relationship exists. The quantitative approach involves the administration of structured surveys to teachers in the Transformative Leadership Programme in the five countries where the programme is being implemented. On the other hand, the qualitative approach involves Focus Group Discussions with teachers. In some instances where it was difficult to hold Focus Group Discussions, interviews were conducted with individuals in the sample.

Scope Of the Study

This study is an output of the Transformative Leadership Programme implemented in five countries. The programme which is aimed at equipping teachers to become exemplary leaders to students is sponsored by the Mastercard Foundation and being implemented by LEAP Africa. This research has been carried out in the five countries where the Transformative Leadership Programme is being implemented.¹¹ The countries include Ghana, Kenya, Malawi, Uganda, and Ethiopia.

Data Analysis

Two kinds of data were collected in course of the study- quantitative and qualitative data. Quantitative data were analysed using descriptive statistics with the aid of the Microsoft Excel software. Qualitative data were analysed using the thematic analysis where transcripts were categorised into emerging themes.

¹¹ The Mastercard Transformative Leadership programme has been completed in three countries Uganda, Malawi, and Ghana, and is still under implementation in Kenya and Ethiopia.

Demographic Data of Participants

Participants by Country

Country	Number of Participants (Survey)	Number of Participants (FGD/Interview)
Ethiopia	8	
Ghana	8	2
Kenya	30	4
Malawi	41	5
Uganda	68	12
Grand Total	155	23

Gender Disaggregation



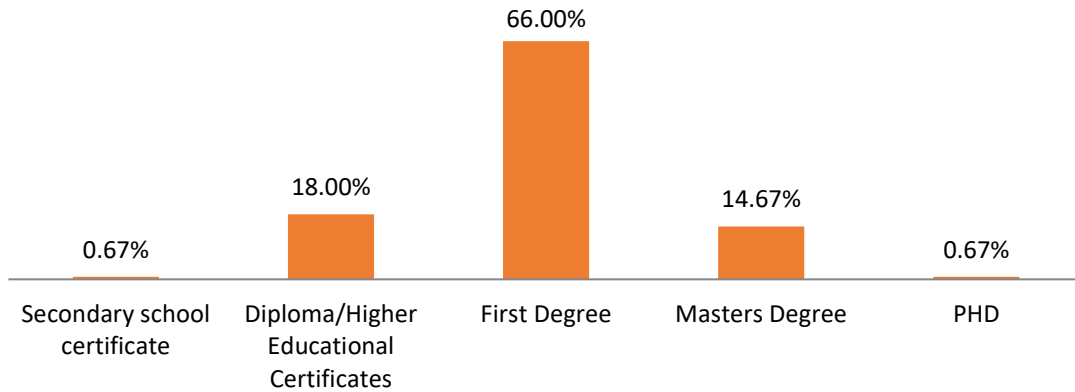
Females constitute 61.33% of the study respondents while males constitute 38.67% of the respondents. It is not surprising that female teachers constitute the majority of the study respondents as they are more female teacher mentors in the Transformative Leadership programme than male teachers.

Location



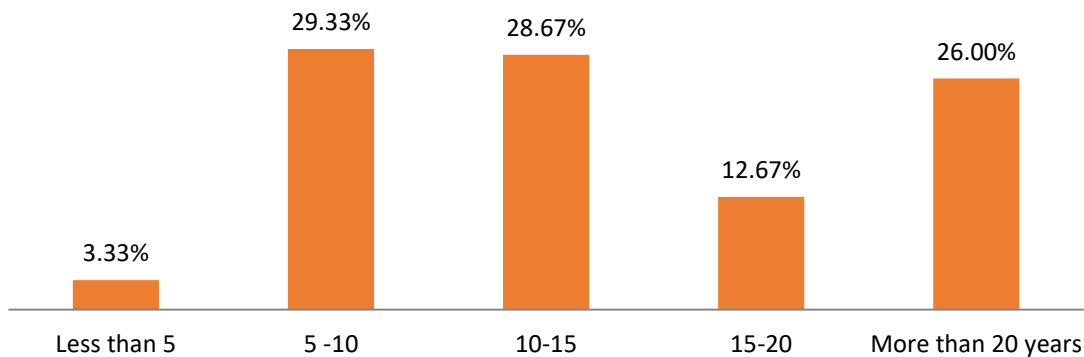
Teachers are equally distributed to rural and urban areas. This implies that teachers in the study are equally represented from schools located in the rural and urban areas.

Educational Qualification



As can be seen in the chart above, more than half of the teachers (66%) have obtained a first degree as their highest educational qualification. 18 percent hold Diploma/Higher educational Certificates, and 14.67 percent- master’s degrees. Both Ph.D. and Secondary School Certificates are held by 0.67 percent of the respondents. The distribution of educational certificates reveals that most teachers have attended degree-awarding institutions and are well educated.

Years in the Teaching Profession



Key Findings

This section presents the findings of the study capable of responding to key questions raised in the study.

1. What are the key elements that determine teacher motivation?
 - a) Do these elements differ across countries?
 - b) Do these elements differ across gender?
 - c) Do these elements differ across locations (rural or urban)
 - d) Do they differ across age brackets?

Key Elements That Determine Teacher Motivation

- **Salaries/Renumeration**

There appear to be some differences in the satisfaction with salaries paid to teachers across the countries. For instance, while teachers in Kenya seem to be satisfied with the salaries paid to them, a teacher in Malawi and Uganda are greatly dissatisfied with the salaries paid to them. A teacher in Malawi reveals that the salaries paid her is not commensurate to the work done.

“Frankly speaking our salaries are very low and that thing also tries to demotivate us but sometimes we say okay life should move on, this is what we are supposed to get, lets work, lets work provided our learners are doing well then you are okay... this is the word we are living in ... we can never be satisfied”

Teachers in Ghana appear to be moderately satisfied with the salaries that they are paid. Despite the salaries paid to teachers in the various countries, teachers seem to be resolved to offer their best to their job for the sole reason of helping students acquire the requisite knowledge to enable them to attain success in careers and life.

“Our salaries are just a peanut not to satisfy our daily needs, but because we are here to teach students, we just do it, in short the salaries are not enough for us,” Teacher MO

- **Intrinsic Motivation**

Apart from Salaries, findings from Teacher focus group discussions and interviews reveal that teachers have a great deal of intrinsic motivation. Teachers from all countries exhibit a great deal of intrinsic motivation for their job. This explains why they can stay on the job despite several challenges that they encounter on the job. Findings reveal that teacher intrinsic motivation comes from the fulfillment of imparting knowledge to their students, thus enabling them to prepare for successful adulthood. Some teachers admit that the love for building future leaders is the only reason why they have not resigned from the profession. Also, few

teachers left other professional endeavours to pursue a career in education for the love of impacting learners.

"I did agricultural economics and was working with the Tobacco Association of Malawi, later I realised that I should join teaching because I have a passion for the girl child" Teacher FM

- **Fringe Benefits**

The range of fringe benefits offered to teachers differs across countries and as expected, teachers in countries like Kenya where several fringe benefits -such as housing allowance, health insurance, professional development support are offered- exhibit higher enthusiasm for their jobs more than teachers in other countries such as Uganda and Malawi where very little fringe benefits are paid. Discussions with teachers showed that fringe benefits complement the role of salaries in sustaining the livelihood of teachers and their dependents. Access to housing, health services, and food are basic requirements for sustenance and where they are available in sufficient quantity one is more motivated to go about their daily activities. Further inquiry on the nature of fringe benefits in the various countries reveal that teachers in the four countries (Ghana, Kenya, Malawi, and Uganda) enjoy a government health insurance scheme that is available to members of the public. However, teachers complain that services available through this health scheme is not always of great quality. As such some teachers must spend from their income to afford better health services.

On housing, teachers in Kenya are paid a monetary allowance for housing, while teachers in Malawi, Ghana, and Uganda are offered housing facilities in the schools where they work. For Ghana, findings show that the available housing units are not often sufficient for all teachers leaving those without to cater for their own housing needs. Having to provide their accommodation puts teachers under strain and demotivates them. So does living in a dilapidated house as is the case of some teachers.

- **Training Opportunities**

Most of the teachers revealed that employers do not provide them opportunities to train themselves and they must cover training costs on their own. Only teachers in Kenya admit to receiving Funding from the government to enable them to take professional development courses. Another point of note is the role of International Non-Governmental organisations in providing teacher training. Findings showed that some teachers are offered training by international NGOs in their various countries. Teachers in Kenya, Malawi and Ghana have benefited from Training by CAMFED in collaboration with LEAP Africa. Teachers in Uganda

have received training from BRAC Uganda and LEAP Africa. These training opportunities have provided the much-needed teacher motivation by meeting teachers' needs for enhanced knowledge and competence in their profession. Specifically, the training has increased teacher competencies by aiding them to adopt more effective methods of instructing learners as well ensuring optimum teacher students' interactions.

"We are very fortunate to be teacher mentors CAMFED has been very fortunate in organising refresher courses...aside that most of the opportunities that come are not very frequent. Most of the time you can attend one or sometimes in a whole year you do not attend any workshop that will show that your professional standard. Recently the Government of Ghana has introduced the Professional Teachers Development Scheme where we are paid some amount every month that is meant for to professionally train us for the task... previously it used to be low and not very frequent." Teacher AL

- **Working Environment**

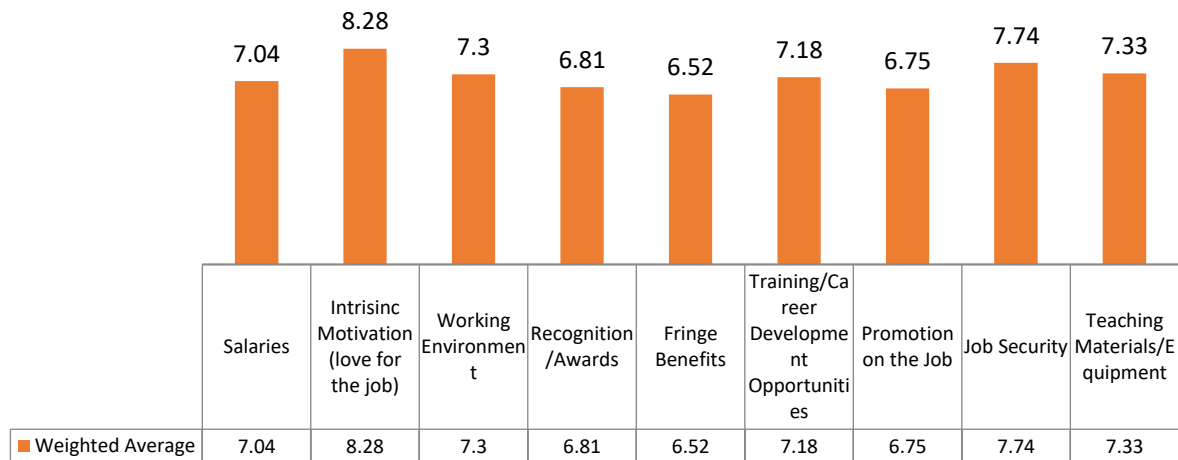
Discussions on the working environment centered on the physical infrastructure and work culture in the schools. Teachers in Kenya indicated that the physical working environment was motivating. This meant that classes and offices are well constructed and maintained. However, teachers in Malawi and Uganda report poor physical environments where most of the buildings were not in good condition and uncomfortable to work in.

"In the school where I teach, the classes were built since 1964 and are not properly maintained since then" Teacher MI.

Overall, teachers spoke well of the working relationship among members of staff in their respective schools.

What Elements of Teacher Motivation Are Most Important?

On a scale of 1-10 where 1 is poor and 10 excellent, rate the importance of the following factors to your motivation as a teacher



The chart above displays teacher ratings of various factors that influence their motivation on the job. Intrinsic motivation receives the highest rating from teachers. This shows that teachers' love for their jobs has the greatest impact on a teacher's motivation with a rating of 8.28. Job security rated 7.74, comes closest to intrinsic motivation as a source of motivation indicating that teachers are incentivised by the low likelihood of being dismissed from their jobs. While on the job, teachers also find motivation in the quality and availability of teaching materials that are provided to aid them in instructing students. This is the reason why teaching materials are ranked third according to the teacher responses. The factor with the least ratings is recognition/Awards, Promotion on the Job, and Fringe benefits with the ratings of 6.81, 6.75 and 6.52 respectively.

While teachers had ranked intrinsic motivation as their highest motivating factor in the survey, findings from Focus Group discussions and interviews reveal that salary is the highest motivating factor. However, owing to the interactive nature of the Discussions and interview it can be reckoned that the findings from the discussions represent the views of the teachers better. This is because the focus group discussions give respondents more time to express their ideas and thoughts as against the survey.

Other Findings

Challenges Faced by Teachers

Teachers are faced with unique challenges in their countries. However, while sharing similar challenges within a particular country, each teacher is faced with a unique challenge in their communities of residence. For instance, in Kenya, a teacher in the rural parts of western and nomadic communities faces the challenge of school dropouts among students. This is owing to the reason that parents in this rural community have little or no value for education. Teachers feel discouraged to have students drop out in the middle of school because it points to a case of wasted investments. Teachers often go a long way to engage learners and their parents on the importance of education in a bid to keep learners in school.

Discussion

The study set out to identify Common factors that encourage teacher motivation across five countries. The study also attempted to identify differences in teacher motivation across countries and locations and gender strata. The findings of the study reveal that salary and intrinsic motivation are the key factors responsible for teacher motivation across the study countries. This implies that teachers consider compensation to be of great importance to them and that intrinsic motivation derived from working with children is not enough to keep one motivated on the job. The importance placed on income by teachers could be due to poverty and economic hardship on the continent. As such even intrinsic motivation will dissipate when income is not commensurate to teacher workload and economic needs.

The study also finds that teacher motivation level differs across countries. Results reveal that teachers from Kenya are more motivated than teachers from other countries in the study (Ghana, Malawi, Uganda, and Ethiopia). This shows that the government of Kenya provides appreciable support to schools in the country in form of adequate pay, housing allowances and health insurance. Teachers in Ghana are motivated, but more can be done to improve their motivation. While motivation is least in Malawi and Uganda where teachers receive low pay and inadequate health services. Teacher motivation does not differ significantly among rural and urban settings because teachers in rural and urban locations receive similar salaries from the government. However, teachers in urban areas may have some other income-earning opportunities but this too is constrained by a heavy workload.

Overall, female teachers appear more motivated than male teachers. This is demonstrated in the passion with which they speak about their job and the impact that they are making in their communities. However, this finding could be questioned as they study comprises more female teachers than male teachers.

The study identified some unexpected findings. An unexpected result in the study is the challenge faced by teachers in the study countries. The challenges are from the work environment and the external environment. Work-related challenges include poor pay, an uncondusive work environment, and a heavy workload. These challenges hurt the morale of teachers and some teachers have considered leaving the teaching profession for better-paying opportunities.

Another unexpected finding in the study is the impact of the COVID 19 on teacher motivation. To curtail the spread of the COVID 19 infections, schools were closed temporarily and at varying periods across the countries. The closure of schools led to the nonpayment of salaries for teachers working in private schools. The non-payment of salaries has made living tough for the affected teachers, some of which have considered living the profession. However, this was not the case for teachers in public schools as their salaries were paid by the government.

Limitations of the Study

Despite the findings of the study, the study itself study has been met with a few limitations.

One of such limitations is the constrained sample number. The small sample number recorded was due to poor internet connectivity which limited the number of possible responses to the survey which was administered online. Similarly, the Focus Group Discussions and interviews could have recorded more participants if they were held in person. Accessibility to internet networks thus limited the participation of respondents in the study. A consequence of this could be that the findings from the study are less robust.

Another limitation of the study is the exclusion of school principals and students from the study. While the study originally planned to include principals and students in the sample, time constraints and COVID 19 restrictions made it difficult to reach out to these members of the intended sub-sample.

Recommendations and Conclusion

Teachers are the bedrock of the nation and should be treated with great respect. The study finds that teacher welfare is not a priority in the study countries which is responsible for low teacher motivation. Low teacher motivation leads to low outcomes in students' performance. It is therefore recommended that the government makes deliberate efforts to improve teacher motivation by increasing teacher salaries and fringe benefits as this will put teachers in high morale, therefore, improving their commitment to ensuring improved learning outcomes among learners.

Teacher training is also key to teacher motivation as it enhances teacher personal and professional competence. There is a need to support teachers to attend regular training. This can be achieved through the provision of training funds by the government. Similarly, development organisations can organise teacher training to support government efforts in training teachers.