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**"Towards an Understanding of Gambian Teachers' Lives and Careers"**

by Guy Roberts-Holmes, MA.

This thesis is submitted to the University of Nottingham for the degree of  
Doctor of Philosophy October 1998



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## Abstract

This research shows that Gambian teachers have complex reasons for joining and remaining in the teaching profession. It builds upon the literature concerning teachers' professionalism in developing countries by describing and analysing Gambian teachers' professional discourses. This thesis argues that Gambian teachers' are active participants who create 'narratives of action' which assert their professionalism. Gambian teachers' understand their work as professional through the overlapping moral discourses of nationalism and Islam. These professional discourses sustain and empower Gambian teachers who often work in difficult material conditions.

Current literature on teachers' professional lives and careers is predominately North American and European. By providing a 'space' within which Gambian teachers' 'storied narratives' may be heard, this thesis *geographically* adds to the literature on teachers' professionalism. Gambian teachers' 'genealogies of context' are based upon histories, religions and cultures *different* to those found within Europe or North America. Thus Gambian teachers' professionalism is *situated* within specific geographical and cultural discourses. Despite the concept of a Gambian situated professionalism, the thesis discusses those professional discourses which are *shared* between Gambian teachers and teachers in Europe and North America. This work *internationally* develops the concept that there are *different* situated professional cultures of teaching and at the same time shared professional teaching discourses.

## **Chapter One:**

### ***The Contradictions of Gambian Teaching: The President's Rhetoric and Teachers' Working Reality***

#### **1.1 The organisation of the thesis**

This chapter provides an overview of the research. I outline the context of teachers' working conditions and draw out the research contradiction which led to the research questions. I provide a research chronology which outlines the order of the research within a time frame (see Table 1.1). A rationale for the research is given. This chapter describes why a qualitative research methodology was chosen which incorporated quantitative techniques. Finally this chapter describes the *changing* context of The Gambia and in particular of Brikama town where I lived and carried out the research for two and a half years.

Chapter Two acknowledges the *limitations* of being an outsider in The Gambia. As a foreigner I was a conspicuous outsider and occasionally found it difficult to avoid attention thus making ethnography difficult. My role as an educational researcher was misunderstood by the teachers, some of whom were suspicious as to my purposes throughout the research. An anecdote describes the painful and unintended consequences of international research. As an outsider it is important that I am explicit concerning my value position and thus chapter two centrally places my political anti-racist value position at the heart of this thesis. I describe how my value position encouraged me to use qualitative research. This

chapter concludes with a discussion of the dilemmas of academic neo-colonialism.

**Chapter Three** is the methodological chapter. I used a qualitative research methodology and both qualitative and quantitative research techniques. I discuss the debate concerning the differences between qualitative and quantitative research. The terminology of ethnography, participant observation and symbolic interactionism is discussed. I describe the research's interpretative ethnographic analysis which attempted to understand the meanings of a range of Gambian teachers' from within their views. (Delamont 1992; Cohen & Manion 1994; Goodson 1995; Denzin 1992,1997). Finally the chapter examines the theoretical concerns of quantitative research.

**Chapter Four** is concerned with the methods of data collection and analysis. In The Gambia data collection and analysis occurred at the same time. Processes of data collection included, documentary collection, observational collection, questionnaire material, informal chats and semi-structured interviews. This data was analysed leading to further data collection. Broad themes were progressively focused into specific research questions. Issues of access and the complexity of research relationships are discussed. Validity and reliability of the research is claimed on the basis of triangulation of the data and these issues are discussed.

**Chapter Five** provides the overall context of The Gambian Education system. I trace the historical development of The Gambian education system from the colonial period, through Independence in 1963, and into the present day. I examine the historically different educational policies and their effects upon The

Gambian education system. Lamin school teachers are interviewed concerning their views on the July 22<sup>nd</sup> 1994 Coup.

**Chapter Six** is concerned with the restructuring of Lamin school teachers' work as a result of World Bank imposed Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAPs). I examine why Structural Adjustment Programmes have been imposed upon The Gambia and their effects upon The Gambian Education system. In particular the teachers' interpretation and understanding of the double shift is examined and discussed.

In the literature search of **Chapters Seven and Eight**, I attempted to locate research which was based within The Gambian/West African context. However, due to a lack of West African literature on teachers' lives and careers much of these chapters is, of necessity, European based. With its different context, European based literature is problematic for this thesis which is set within West Africa. Thus I have attempted to work predominately with European and North American literature which allows for *diversity* within and between teachers' lives and careers. I examine the literature which emphasises the ambiguous, contradictory and shifting nature of teachers' professionalism (Apple 1980; Ball 1995; Day 1994; Goodson 1996; Hargreaves 1996; Lortie 1975; Robertson 1996).

**Chapter Nine** is a thematic examination of two hundred student teachers' questionnaires examining the student teachers' motivations for entering the profession, their gender and socio-economic backgrounds and their expectations of their chosen profession. I discuss the ways in which The Gambia College's ideology is one of moral service and commitment to The Gambia. These themes



and their evaluation reinforce the qualitative themes which emerged from in-depth interviewing with Lamin Primary School teachers which is presented in Chapters ten and eleven.

Chapter ten represents Lamin teachers' voices. I present an overview of the 'key informants'. The chapter is concerned with the *diverse* reasons as to why Lamin school teachers entered the profession, their feelings about their salary and the perspectives of being a female teacher at Lamin primary school.

Chapter eleven is an interpretation of Lamin school teachers' understanding of their profession. The themes which emerged included nationalism and Islam and the moral discourses of Gambian teachers' professionalism. The teachers told me that their professionalism is underpinned by relatively good employment terms and conditions.

Chapter twelve summarises the research's findings by restating and answering the research questions. The chapter summarises how a Gambian teacher's professionalism is constructed by the overlapping discourses of Islamic morality, nationalism and employment conditions. I argue that the recent double shift intensification serves to professionalise *and* deprofessionalise Gambian teachers. This understanding is dependent upon Gambian teacher's *situated* professionalism. The concept of a *situated* professionalism is developed from this discussion. The chapter concludes with a discussion of the shared professional discourses which are held in common by both Western (European and North American) and Gambian teachers. Comparative collaborative

research is discussed as a way of examining the reasons for these shared professional discourses in different contexts.

The following section outlines the rationale for the research.

## **1.2 Rationale for the research**

The research attempts to show Gambian teachers being *active agents* in their lives and careers despite the structural conditions of The Gambia. I wanted to represent the diverse 'voices' of Gambian teachers which I had heard whilst working at The Gambia College (Hargreaves 1996). West African teachers' 'voices' have rarely been heard within European and North American institutions and literature (Bame 1993). Thus this thesis attempts to provide a 'space' in which Gambian teachers' 'voices' may be heard. By reflecting different and contesting Gambian teachers' 'voices', the thesis avoids 'romanticising' the complexity of their lives and careers (Day 1994; Hargreaves 1996). Thus this research highlights the complexities, subtleties and contradictions of *being a Gambian primary teacher* (Nias 1989). By doing so the thesis challenges the 'cardboard cut out' images of Gambian teachers held by the World Bank (1988; 1991).

The following two vignettes provide a 'flavour' of The Gambia by describing the annual Graduation Ceremony and contrasting its opulence with the harsh working conditions of a Gambian teachers' classroom.

### ***1.3 The Opulence of The Gambia College Graduation Ceremony***

It was April 1994 and the preparations for The Gambia College Graduation Ceremony had begun in February that year. I was employed by the then Overseas Development Administration (ODA) as a lecturer at The Gambia College (see Table 1.1). The College had been freshly painted, and new furniture had been arriving for months. No expense had been spared. Beautiful canopies covered with palm fronds had been erected in the courtyard where the Ceremony was to take place. A high rostrum for the President and vice-president and dignitaries had been built. The Gambian national flag was in evidence all over the college and bright bunting hung from every building. The program which contained the College's history, the names of the invited guests, the guest speaker, lecturers and the graduating student teachers had taken my colleague several months to correctly assemble and print. This thirty page booklet had emptied the Colleges' stocks of printing paper and ink. In the Great Hall, the tables groaned under a sumptuous buffet banquet with many choices of meat, cakes and with a large variety of drinks.

**Table 1.1: The research chronology showing the use of both quantitative and qualitative methods.**

<p><b>1993</b></p> <p><b><i>In The Gambia</i></b>          In September I started a Lectureship in the Teacher Training Department of The Gambia College, West Africa. I was recruited by Voluntary Services Overseas (VSO) and employed by the Overseas Development Administration (ODA) on a two year contract.</p> <p>Whilst a Gambia College teacher trainer I carried out informal ethnography.          Throughout the academic year (1993-1994) I had wide ranging discussions with Gambia College staff and students on educational issues.</p>	<p><b>1994</b></p> <p><b><i>In The Gambia</i></b>          In April I attended The Gambia College Graduation Ceremony (see Section 1.1).          Ideas of carrying out doctoral research around the theme of Gambian primary teachers' lives and careers slowly emerged.</p> <p><b><i>In England</i></b> (July and August)          These ideas were developed during the summer holidays when I returned to the UK. I read extensively on teachers' lives and careers at the Institute of Education, London. I began to write a pilot questionnaire concerned with Gambia College primary student teachers' perceptions of the teaching profession (see Chapter Nine).          At the end of August I returned to The Gambia College for the second year of my contract.</p>	<p><b>1995</b></p> <p><b><i>In The Gambia</i></b>          In March I designed and piloted a questionnaire with 35 Gambia College student teachers. In May an amended questionnaire was administered to 181 student teachers. In July my two year contract at The Gambia College was completed and I returned to England.</p> <p><b><i>In England</i></b> (September)          I registered for the Ph.D. at the University of Nottingham and I started my Literature Review on teachers' lives and careers. I began to analyse the questionnaire data I had collected in The Gambia. Fourteen months later, in November 1996, I returned to The Gambia to carry out the qualitative ethnographic fieldwork.</p>	<p><b>1996-1997</b></p> <p><b><i>In The Gambia</i></b>          From November (1996) to February (1997) I carried out qualitative ethnographic research with 28 teachers in Lamin Primary School, Brikama.</p> <p><b><i>In England</i></b>          In March 1997 I started to 'Write Up' the thesis using the quantitative and qualitative data I had collected in The Gambia</p>
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Now the great day had arrived and the crowd hushed as we heard the Mercedes' sirens of the President's entourage arriving. The President's attendance at this ceremony was a 'particular historical moment' (Ball and Goodson 1985;11) in these teachers' careers. The President's appearance was symbolic of the importance the state attached to teaching.

As the President neared the soldiers begun to fidget with their weapons and peered at us through their sunglasses. Despite sitting in the shade under the beautiful canopies, I was sweating in the many layers of my finely embroidered Islamic haftan which I had been loaned for the day. A colleague had sent his son with the haftan early that morning. My lecturing colleagues sat around me wearing their gowns from Canadian, American and British universities. The male teachers who were graduating today, wore dark suits or haftans. The women wore beautiful elaborate dresses with eloquently tied head scarves. It was a most splendid scene and the sense of excitement was tangible. I felt proud to have worked at The Gambia College for the past two years. Some of my colleagues were now friends and I had a wonderful relationship with the some of the students. I had certainly learnt far more in the past two years than I had taught. I felt personally enriched to have lived in the vibrant, generous and stimulating culture of Islamic West Africa.

The President and vice-president, who were both under thirty years old and were wearing military uniforms and sunglasses, walked out into the bright sunshine.

We all stood up and clapped. The President and vice-president were greeted by the College's Principal who showed them to their seats. Their seats were on a high rostrum where many dignitaries sat. The military band played the National Anthem and everybody stood to attention and sung the words. The television crews filmed us. We felt like celebrities. The Graduation Ceremony of these student teachers was truly a national occasion, which like myself they would surely remember for the rest of their lives.

The guest speaker, a Gambian writer, welcomed everybody and spoke of the great honour he had in being part of the Graduation Ceremony. He spoke of the tremendous responsibility the newly qualified teachers had in teaching the younger generation who were the nation's future and The Gambia's greatest asset. The Roll of Honour was called and each student was presented with his or her Qualified Teacher's Certificate and the crowd clapped and cheered. Photographs were taken of the students to remind them of their great day in which even the President himself had honoured their work as teachers. Eventually the proud students and their families made their way to enjoy the sumptuous buffet lunch with the President moving amongst them.

#### ***1.4 Mr. Sillah's History Lesson at Lamin Primary School***

The children and myself sat in rapt attention as Mr. Sillah brought the interesting and stimulating Gambian history lesson alive with a stream of questions. Kawsu Sillah<sup>1</sup> had an infectious enthusiasm and energy for his work and was proud to be a respected member of the teaching profession. A tall man he stooped down to write on the low broken blackboard which was crooked. The children at the back of the sixty or so other children in the class strained to read Kawsu Sillah's writing on the far away blackboard. They struggled to write neatly in their exercise books. Their writing was hampered by a lack of space since there were six children to a small wobbly table. These six children shared one text book. There was a distinct lack of teaching resources in this 'chalk and talk' classroom.

There was no piped water in the school so near the blackboard was a bucket of water and one cup from which children drank. The cool winter Harmattan wind blew through the small glassless 'windows' across the children who shivered since they were barefoot on the cold broken earth which served as the classroom floor. The Harmattan wind occasionally rattled the corrugated iron roof which was laid across rough wooden poles above our heads. There was no ceiling. There were no cupboards and no pictures on the rough cracked walls. The 'windows' were small and since there was no electricity for lights, the class was quite dark.

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<sup>1</sup> The teachers' names within this thesis are made up to ensure their anonymity and confidentiality (Delamont 1992).

Mr. Sillah had told me that the classroom had been paid for and built by the parents. The Government only paid for Mr. Sillah's salary.

Through the 'window' it was possible to see the rest of Lamin school set around a large sand playground. The single storied classroom blocks were strung out in long terraced rows around three edges of this hot and dusty playground. Since there was no school hall the playground was used for morning and afternoon Islamic prayers and assemblies. The playground sand also served as the school dining room. The one thousand six hundred children and the nearly fifty teachers ate from large communal bowls of meat and rice which were placed on the ground. The air was full of dust and sand from the playground and my eyes streamed.

Since the school was unfenced several goats had wandered into the playground trying to find edible scraps in the sand. There was no staff room in the school so several teachers huddled together under the communal mango tree with shawls over their heads to keep the dust out of their eyes. Behind them I could see some children pumping water from the well which they then carried to the classrooms in buckets on their heads.

Near the mango tree which served as the staff room the Headmaster's office door was open as it always was. Like all the school buildings a corrugated iron roof covered his office and like the classrooms there was no ceiling or floor. 'Master'



as he was known had the telephone, the one piece of modern equipment in the school.

As I sat in Mr. Sillah's class, aware of the school's material poverty (which he pointed out to me), I found myself contrasting it to the material opulence of The Gambia College's Graduation Ceremony. The material conditions under which Mr. Sillah taught seemed far removed from the material conditions of the Graduation Ceremony I had attended two years previously. The rhetoric of the politicians who praised the graduating teachers was not reflected in the working conditions of the school.

### ***1.5 The above experiences were 'key moments' in the development of the research questions***

The contrasting experiences of observing Mr. Sillah teaching and my attendance at The Gambia College Graduation ceremony, helped with the formulation of the research questions (see below). It is important to note that the research questions developed over the course of three years (September 1993-November 1996). Thus the experiences which I have written about above were a part in the process of developing my research questions.

Whilst sitting in Mr. Sillah's history lesson a 'key moment' in the development of my research questions for this thesis occurred (Mac An Ghail 1994; Sewell

1994). The 'key moment' was my realisation of the stark contradiction between teachers' daily living and working conditions and the magnificent opulence and rhetoric surrounding the state occasion of the teachers' Graduation Ceremony at The Gambia College. Whilst working in conditions which challenged Gambian teachers' professionalism<sup>2</sup>, teachers were acclaimed by the President as 'important nation builders' (Daily Observer February 1994). Similarly Lortie notes,

'Teaching is honoured and disdained, praised as "dedicated service" and lampooned as "easy work". It is permeated with the rhetoric of professionalism, yet features incomes below those earned by workers with considerably less education' (Lortie 1975;10).

This apparent contradiction between teacher's esteemed public approval and their poor working conditions led to the development of the research questions which are outlined in the next section.

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<sup>2</sup> 'Teachers' professionalism' is an ambiguous and contested term (Goodson and Hargreaves 1996). I understand professionalism to mean a focus on the quality of a person's professional *practice* (Hoyle 1980). In Chapter Seven I discuss the notion of teachers' professionalism at length.

## **1.6 The research contradiction and the research questions**

*'Given the poor material conditions of the Gambian teaching profession (according to teachers these were; large classes, dilapidated school buildings, scarce resources, heavy work load and few promotion opportunities) why was it that some of the Gambian teachers I had observed, such as Kawsu Sillah, demonstrated such commitment to their work?'*

In order to answer this research question the following further questions emerged.

- Why did Gambian student teachers train to be teachers?
- What motivated Gambian teachers to stay in the teaching profession?
- What, according to the teachers, was Gambian society's perceptions of teaching and teachers?
- How had the recent political changes effected teachers' work?
- What does 'professional teacher' mean within the Gambian context?

In order to answer these research questions a qualitative methodology was chosen which incorporated quantitative methods. The following section outlines the methodology of the research.

**Table 1.2: Table showing the research's development from preliminary focusing upon broad hypotheses to progressive focusing upon specific analytic categories.**

Phase One: Gambia College 1993	Phase Two: Gambia College 1994	Phase Three: Gambia College 1995	Phase Four: Lamin School 1996-1997	Phase Five: Lamin School 1997
<p><i>Preliminary focusing upon potential research areas.</i></p> <p>Classroom management styles.</p> <p>Islamic education.</p> <p><b>Student teachers' motivation in becoming teachers.</b></p> <p>Differences between rural and urban schools.</p> <p>Costs of education to parents.</p> <p>Motivations of parents in sending children to school.</p> <p><i>Data analysis and reflection upon above potential research areas led to researching student teachers.</i></p>	<p><i>Development of broad hypotheses.</i></p> <p>Through informal observations and 'chats' I developed broad hypotheses concerning student teachers' motivations.</p> <p>I hypothesised that national development was a major reason for joining the teaching profession and that student teachers were generally satisfied with their chosen profession.</p> <p>I tested these hypotheses using large scale questionnaires.</p>	<p><i>Broad questions of Gambia College questionnaire.</i></p> <p>What are student teachers' attitudes towards the teaching profession?</p> <p>What are student teachers' reasons for joining the teaching profession?</p> <p>Are student teachers generally satisfied or dissatisfied with their chosen profession?</p> <p><i>Data analysis of questionnaires confirmed my hypotheses in phase two. I realised the need for further ethnographic field work and progressively focused upon specific questions.</i></p>	<p><i>Semi-structured interviews with Lamin School Primary Teachers</i></p> <p>Why do some teachers demonstrate such commitment to their work?</p> <p>Why did teachers stay in the profession?</p> <p>What did teachers think of the recent political changes?</p> <p>What does 'professional teacher' mean in the Gambian context?</p> <p><i>Data analysis led to the progressive focusing upon several analytic categories</i></p>	<p><i>The progressive focusing upon the following analytic categories.</i></p> <p>Diverse motivations for joining profession</p> <p>National development</p> <p>'Noble' profession; Islam and morals</p> <p>Salary</p> <p>Political changes</p> <p>Gender differences</p> <p>Promotion issues</p> <p>Double shift teaching</p> <p>Community respect for teachers.</p>

## **1.7 The qualitative methodology and eclectic methods<sup>3</sup> of the research**

( see Tables 1.1 and 1.2).

A qualitative research methodology was chosen because it suited my political anti-racist position which underpinned the ethics of the research<sup>4</sup> (see Chapter Two). The qualitative research tradition enabled me to understand Gambian teachers' lives and careers from the diverse perspectives of Gambian teachers themselves<sup>5</sup>. I wanted to see Gambian teachers' events, actions, norms and values from *their* perspectives. Within this overall qualitative research methodology I adopted a multi-*method* approach which drew upon the strengths of both quantitative and qualitative *techniques* (Bryman 1988; Silverman 1985; Vulliamy et al 1990).

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<sup>3</sup> Methodology refers to the epistemological position which informs a study. Method refers to the techniques used to gather and analyse information (Bryman 1988). The various methods described in this section are discussed in detail in Chapter Three.

<sup>4</sup> Vulliamy (1990) argues that an important ethical reason for the use of qualitative research in developing countries is that it has the *potential* to facilitate more equal collaboration between practitioners and researchers than a quantitative analysis.

<sup>5</sup> A discussion of the problems associated with the qualitative research methodology of 'seeing through the eyes of' Gambian teachers is given in Chapter Three.

As a lecturer at The Gambia College (1993-1995 see Research Chronology, Table 1.1) I carried out informal and unstructured qualitative ethnography. I casually discussed broad Gambian educational issues with my teaching colleagues and with students and I reflected and analysed upon my experiences of living and working in The Gambia. I scanned the newspapers for articles on educational issues and discussed these with Gambia College colleagues. In my capacity as an observer of students on teaching practice I visited many diverse urban and rural primary schools. I kept a diary of my observations and feelings. In April 1994 and April 1995 I attended The Gambia College Graduation Ceremony for teachers which was most revealing about the political status of the Gambian teaching profession.

This informal but nonetheless intensive and revealing ethnographic fieldwork provided me with sufficient knowledge and contextual information to develop broad hypotheses with the students I was teaching (see Table 1.2). Thus in the spring term of my second academic year at The Gambia College I piloted and subsequently administered a questionnaire with 181 Gambia College student teachers. The questionnaire was designed to test the preliminary hypotheses and to explore the students' perceptions of their profession. A cursory analysis of the questionnaires confirmed my hypotheses, as did the subsequent SPSS analysis. However the questionnaires simply scratched the surface of what were complex cultural processes. Metaphorically, I needed to add flesh to the 'cardboard cut out figures' of the Gambian students teachers (Ball and Goodson

1985). Additionally, I needed to collect data outside The Gambia College in a school in order to gain an overall perspective of Gambian teachers' lives and careers.

Thus I returned to The Gambia for a second period of ethnographic data collection in a large urban primary school. I spent four months in the primary school (November 1996-February 1997) carrying out document data collection, observations, in-depth semi-structured interviewing and preliminary interview analysis with a wide range (female, male, old, young, experienced and inexperienced) of primary teachers. I knew the headteacher and several of the teachers since I had visited the school on numerous occasions in my capacity as a teacher trainer observing student teachers on teaching practice. In the following sections I describe Brikama town in which both The Gambia College and Lamin Primary School are located.

### ***1.8 Brikama town***

The Gambia College and Lamin school are located in Brikama which is one of the fastest growing urban towns in The Gambia. Brikama's population has doubled in the last ten years from some 25,000 in 1986 to nearly 57,000 in 1997 (Social Dimensions of Adjustment). The normal movement of peoples from rural to urban settings to increase their standard of living has been intensified as a result of the

Sahelian drought which has encouraged people to look for more varied forms of employment (Kea 1998).

There is a constant flow of people, traffic and goods in and out of Brikama destined to one of the many quarters of the town, to the coast, or up country to the provinces. The scene in the centre of Brikama where one finds the main taxi park and market is intense and frenetic. The Elf petrol station across from the taxi park provides a ready source of petrol for the sustained movement of traffic. Brikama market is one of the biggest in the country after Serrakunda and Banjul. Its vitality is best appreciated on a Friday morning when items are bought and sold with the knowledge that business must be completed just before the two o'clock Friday prayers.

There are no real industries in Brikama, with the exception of a recently established fish processing plant (Galilee), vehicle, refrigerator and machine repair workshops, bakeries and a cold storage plant. Small-scale business is widely prevalent, as are a number of smaller markets for agricultural produce from surrounding areas. There are various credit and financial institutions, representative branches of ministries and some local and government institutions located in the central part of Brikama next to the main market. In addition there is a main clinic, and schools. There are three nursery and primary schools, Brikama, Kabafita and Lamin. Lamin School, the case-study school, is located on an unmade sand road about half a mile from Brikama central bus and taxi park.



There are five secondary schools Forsters, Bottrop Kinderdorf, Brikama, Presentation and Secretarial college. The fact that there are five secondary schools is reflective of the lack of rural secondary schools and hence the school student migration to towns such as Brikama. The Gambia teacher training college is located just on the west side of the town as is an Islamic Institute and a number of Arabic schools. Brikama boasts a community centre, a sports field, a cinema, two night-clubs, a few local restaurants scattered throughout the town and a sophisticated telecommunications system.

The main road into Brikama is paved, as are parts of the roads running through the town however the vast majority, of which there are hundreds, are unpaved leading to great pools of water and severe erosion during the rainy season, from late June to early October. Great heaps of rubbish serve as markers of areas and quarters to those who are new to the town. They are deposited behind or in front of compounds, or on smaller roads, frequently blocking the movement of traffic, at which point they are ritually burned. In the centre of Brikama is the dominating and beautiful Mosque building.

## 1.9 Conclusion

I lived and worked in The Gambia during a period of rapid political change which made the research most stimulating. In order to place the teachers within their 'genealogies of context'<sup>6</sup> (Goodson 1996), this thesis examines the *changing* Gambian political and socio-economic context. This is important because:

'Any attempt to portray the contemporary situation of teachers' work and teachers' careers must inevitably begin by recognising the changing context within which this work is undertaken and careers constructed' (Ball & Goodson 1985;2).

In July 1994 there was a military coup which swept aside the thirty three year old one party state which had led The Gambia since Independence.<sup>7</sup> Many of the teachers I worked with were pleased about the political changes since the new Government had prioritised education and new schools were being built and resources made available (Chapter Five).

Other changes which impinged upon the teachers' lives originated within the international context<sup>8</sup>. The World Bank had imposed educational reforms such as double shift teaching which had dramatically intensified some Gambian teacher's

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<sup>6</sup> This term is fully discussed in Chapters Six, Seven and Eleven.

<sup>7</sup> On July 4th 1994 Lieutenant Yaya J.J. Jammeh, a twenty eight year old army officer, led a successful and bloodless coup against President Jawarra who led the People's Progressive Party (PPP). President Jawarra had been in power since Gambian Independence from Britain in 1963. President Jawarra was widely seen as corrupt and autocratic and the PPP as being so corrupt that it hindered future economic development of The Gambia (Daily Observer August 1994; BBC Focus on Africa February 1995; Yeebo 1995).

<sup>8</sup> The Gambian education system has historically been connected to the international community (See Chapters Five and Six). An historical, political and economic 'web of connections' joins Gambian schools and their teachers to the centres of economic power in London and New York (Graham-Brown 1991;13).

work (Chapters Five and Seven). I was aware of the above important contextual information, which is developed and embellished throughout the thesis, because I had lived and worked in The Gambia for two years.

## ***Chapter Two:***

### ***The limitations of being an outsider***

#### ***Introduction***

In this chapter I discuss some of the political dilemmas and limitations of being a white British man conducting research in The Gambia, West Africa. (The subtle and complex issues of shifting power in research relationships is discussed in Chapter Four). This chapter acknowledges that the research is limited by my gendered and eurocentric interpretative perspective. Other limitations included being a conspicuous outsider whom some of the teachers were suspicious of throughout the duration of the research. My role as a researcher was variously *misunderstood* as an inspector or an advisor or a World Bank official looking to make financial savings. My role was also misinterpreted as a philanthropist looking to sponsor teachers for overseas scholarships. The research was limited by the fact that some of the teachers wished to present a good impression of their country and they thus presented me with 'ideal' images of themselves as teachers.

The political dilemmas in carrying out international research (Goldberg 1993; Hall 1996; Griffiths and Parker-Jenkins 1994; Said 1978) *demand* that I make my political and value position explicit. Crucially different political values can lead to

different facts (Smith 1989; Denzin 1989), thus the researcher's political value position is paramount in the construction of knowledge.

An anti-racist political value position underpinned the thinking and writing of this thesis. This is because I understand Gambian poverty<sup>9</sup> as a product of the imperialist and capitalist system which has historically *created* and continues to *create and sustain* economic inequalities between rich 'core' economies (such as Britain) and poor 'peripheral' economies (such as The Gambia) (Wallerstein 1991 ;Rodney 1972). Along with capitalism, racism helps to sustain these international economic inequalities (Gilroy 1993) hence my anti-racist value position.

## ***2.1 The Importance of Stating My Value Position Regarding The History Between England and The Gambia***

The following quote explains why it is important that my value and political positions are made clear:

'I do not believe that authors are mechanically determined by ideology, class, or economic history but authors are, I also believe, very much in the history of their societies, shaping and shaped by that history and their social experience in different measure' (Said 1993;xxiv).

Said states that as an author my writing is *shaped* by my society. Thus my writing must be politically reflexive to avoid some of the limitations of

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<sup>9</sup> The United Nations Development Programme (1994) ranked The Gambia as one of the world's poorest nations.

Eurocentricism<sup>10</sup> (Gilroy 1993; Goldberg 1993; Hall 1996). As Said points out authors are not, however, passive victims to their cultures and histories (Rhodes 1994). I am an active agent able to challenge and contest some of the European based assumptions within which I live and which effect relationships between England and The Gambia. By confronting the European based history between The Gambia and England with an explicit anti-racist political position it is possible to *begin* to disentangle myself from that history (Goldberg 1993; Gilroy 1993).

For some four hundred years Britain has had exploitative political and socio-economic interests in West Africa<sup>11</sup> (Onimode 1988). These interests have included trade and commerce in the form of slavery, agricultural products, ivory and gold<sup>12</sup> (Quinn 1972; Graham 1976). This trade has been politically organized under colonialism and more recently neo-colonialism. This exploitative trade has resulted in the underdevelopment of The Gambia (Rodney 1972). As an individual, (to the Gambian teachers), I made clear my antiracist/anti-imperialist values.

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<sup>10</sup> I write *partial* truths, limited within a masculine European based discursive and narrative framework (Foucault 1978; Sewell 1995; Clifford 1986; Ball 1997).

<sup>11</sup> Gilroy (1993) metaphorically refers to the complex transnational and intercultural relationship between West Africa and The Americas as the 'black Atlantic'. The 'black Atlantic' politically, economically and culturally co-joins and intertwines the continents of Africa, America and Europe.

<sup>12</sup> Wolf (1982) argues that the slave trade provided the capital that allowed England to take off into the industrial revolution. He also noted that the supply side of the slave trade was entirely in African hands (Wolf 1982;4). The following vignette serves to highlight some of the complexities of this violent history. One evening a drunk local Government official started accusing me of being 'a white slaver'. My friend, a local doctor, told the Government official that if anybody was to be accused of slavery then the Government official was more implicated in slavery than me because his family wealth was known to have originated in the selling of slaves.

## 2.2 *I was first a European and secondly an individual*

It is important to acknowledge that the historical and contemporary relationship between England and The Gambia meant that I may have been initially perceived as a European rather than as an individual. Said states that the researcher:

'comes up against the Orient'<sup>13</sup> as a European first and as individual second. It means being aware that one belongs to a power with definite interests in the Orient, and more important, that one belongs to a part of the earth with a definite history of involvement in the Orient almost since the time of Homer' (Said 1978;11).

Said states that I may have been *initially* perceived by Gambians as a European male with its concomitant historical baggage. Thus my individual anti-racist politics comes second. This immediately problematises the rhetoric of being able to hold an antiracist political position in all contexts. Said advocates critical reflection upon the history between Europe and West Africa which may help towards its mitigation. Critical reflection of this history has led me to an anti-racist/imperialist political position.

In the following section I describe how the July 22nd 1994 Gambian military Coup highlighted my need for an overt political position. The coup demonstrated the way in which I was inadvertently caught up in international politics which could not be ignored (Clifford 1986).

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<sup>13</sup> Said refers to the Orient, but loosely defined within the historical power relations of coloniser and colonised, West Africa may be read as the Orient.

### ***2.3 My antiracist and anti-imperialist value position in the light of The Gambian Coup of July 22nd 1994***

The coup challenged the political status quo and thus indirectly the British High Commission who had overtly supported the previous Government (Daily Observer 1994; Yeebo 1995). Some Gambian newspapers argued that the subsequent British High Commission's 'travel warning advice', which effectively stopped the 1994/1995 winter tourist season, was punitive (The Daily Observer, November 1994; The Point, December 1994). The 'travel warning advice' was made on the grounds that The Gambia was too dangerous for foreign nationals. This 'advice' had dire economic consequences for the tens of thousands of seasonal Gambian hotel workers dependent upon the winter tourist season.

As a British citizen I was placed in an uncomfortable position by the action of the British High Commission. I felt it necessary to explain to colleagues that I disagreed with the British High Commission's position. I explained to the teachers that I was in sympathy with the July 22nd Coup and that I was opposed to the British High Commission's travel advice.



## ***2.4 My Antiracist Value Positions in this Research***

It is necessary to ground my values within a working definition of antiracism (Haw 1996). The following is a worthwhile definition of antiracist research:

‘Research is antiracist if it problematises and challenges racism..... It should not wittingly or unwittingly contribute to further racist/sexist/bourgeois oppression or interpretation’ (Mirza 1995;166).

This thesis ‘problematises and challenges’ the World Bank’s stereotypes (1990;1993) and ‘regimes of truth’ concerning Gambian teachers’ lives and careers (Foucault 1980; Goldberg 1993). It contributes towards antiracist knowledge by re-presenting Gambian teachers as complex and contradictory. These contradictory, complex and subtle ‘voices’ of Gambian teachers challenge ‘romantic’ stereotypes (Hargreaves 1996). Thus this research can be said to add to anti-racist knowledge.

However antiracist informed research ‘is characterised by obstacles and pitfalls’ and a ‘myriad of complexities’ (Neal 1995;529). Griffiths and Parker-Jenkins (1994) describe how ‘they fell far short of their aspirations’ in attempting an ethical and equitable method of working in Ghana. They argue that there is a need for ‘greater acknowledgement of the depth of problems’ in international research such as cultural domination and self-interest and insider/outsider differences. Due to the dearth of such a critical debate they state that ‘at least some reflection of these dilemmas’ should appear in research (Griffiths and Parker-Jenkins 1994;457). Research which is informed by the principles of antiracism can

appear 'comfortable' with the notion of black people as victims (Gilroy 1993). It is important to note that Gambian peoples are not mere victims of world injustice but are and have been historically pro-active in fighting poverty. Gambian peoples themselves are much better at fighting racial injustice and poverty than I can ever be on their behalf (Haw 1996). Thus this thesis is *not* about speaking *for* Gambian teachers, which can reinforce power differences but rather it is written *about* Gambian teachers.

In the following section I examine the dilemmas of being an outsider researching primary school teachers in The Gambia. (In Chapter Four I explain *how* I negotiated the role of the outsider researcher because I was *known* by some of the teachers as a lecturer at The Gambia College.)

### ***2.5 The limitations of being an outsider researching teachers***

As a foreigner I was a conspicuous outsider. There were obvious limits to the extent to which I could 'blend into the fabric of the system I researched' (Vulliamy et al 1990;211) as is the ideal in ethnography. In Nigeria, Stephens (in Vulliamy et al 1990;79) mentioned 'the difficulties in *avoiding* attention'. Many tourists in jeeps passed Lamin school on their way to the beach so I was not the novelty I would have been in an up-country rural school. Nevertheless, when I first arrived at the school many children called out 'tubab, tubab' which means foreigner. They stopped calling out after the first week, however, some of them continued to stare for a week later or so. The teachers were equally interested in what I was doing in their school and I explained that I was carrying out independent

research. However, even up until the end of the research my role was misunderstood. This can be the case even for Gambian researchers. Despite the fact that Sarr was a Gambian carrying out research in Gambian schools, the teachers were suspicious of him because 'there is little research done in Gambian schools' (Sarr and Lewin 1991).

Carrying out research in Indian primary schools, Choksi and Dyer (1997) mention that the teachers' perceptions were of researchers as outsiders who had probably come to look for problems since primary schools are rarely visited by anyone except the inspector, whose visits are associated with fault finding.

'Teachers did not really understand why we were there, asking all those questions, and were suspicious of us' (Choksi and Dyer 1997;275 in Crossley and Vulliamy 1997).

The main problem for me with some of the teachers was building up trust<sup>14</sup> since they did not understand what I was doing and were defensive. Some of the teachers may have wondered why a former lecturer at The Gambia College with connections in the Ministry of Education and a research post in a British University was doing in their primary school for four months. As with Choksi and

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<sup>14</sup> With some of the teachers, such as Master, I had already developed a rapport and a trusting relationship based upon my two years as a teacher trainer. These teachers trusted me because they felt that I was *sympathetic towards their interests* (Finch 1993) and I constantly reaffirmed this trust by stating that the research would challenge the ignorance about Gambian teachers in England. For Mason (1996) trust is to do with honesty, ethics and *politics*. I was *honest* with the teachers about my reasons for doing the research (a Ph.D. *and politically* to challenge myths about Gambian teachers). Developing and sustaining this trust was critical to the research since the teachers had no way of knowing what I would do with their narratives when I left The Gambia (Finch 1993).

Dyer (1997) the teachers at Lamin school may have thought I was coming to check up on their teaching styles. Some of the teacher's apprehension of my 'checking up' on them would have been encouraged because Lamin school was one in which Voluntary Services Overseas were training three teachers to become Resource Teachers. Similarly Nigerian teachers remained suspicious of Stephen's motives.

'Perhaps I was really an inspector checking on attendance? Or the overseas arm of some benevolent aid agency looking for children to sponsor? Or a site to offload some cast-off textbooks from Europe?' (Stephens in Vulliamy et al 1990;79)

Even towards the end of the research some of the teachers were unclear as to what I was doing. In the last month of the research a teacher asked me if I worked for the World Bank and if I could secure him his promotion. Another wondered if I had selected those teachers who were to get scholarships to go to Britain. These teachers remained unclear of the research's purposes throughout the study. This may have been because the relationship between the researcher and respondents 'are subject to confusion and misinterpretation' Paetcher (1996). This can occur because of the difficulty in explaining the research process.

As an outsider I was presented with specific 'storied narratives' (Clifford 1986) because as representatives of The Gambia, the teachers wished to present a 'good impression' of their country (Choksi and Dyer 1997). The Gambian

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teachers were 'actively engaged in representing themselves' (Moore and Vaughan 1993;xviii). Thus my interpretations were based upon specific observations which the Gambian teachers *presented* to an outsider. The teachers presented me with the 'ideal' image of themselves as constantly hardworking, committed professionals who were always at school. This presentation of themselves was sometimes more accurate than at other times. Master chose *not* to relate to me the story of *how* his young second wife, who had recently left Gambia College one year earlier, had already achieved the high career position of being a Grade One Senior Mistress. Instead the storied narratives with which he chose to represent himself contained the overlapping discourses of being a 'noble', honest, God fearing and patriotic head teacher. This representation of himself partially served to obfuscate other aspects of his working life which he did not wish highlighted. Thus from the contradictory and multiple selves (see Chapter seven), the 'ideal' 'self as teacher' was presented (Nias 1989) to me.

The following vignette serves to illustrate the sometimes painful and unintended outcomes of ethnographies within the international context when conducted by an outsider. Ebrima, the store-keeper at The Gambia College, and myself had become friends. We had socialised together and with each others' families and he had told me whilst I was in The Gambia that he intended to visit me in London. Being aware of his salary and the cost of the plane ticket I was surprised when he phoned to tell me that he was flying to London. When I went to meet him at Heathrow, I was informed that he was liable to be detained as a possible illegal

immigrant. This was based upon the fact that he had with him his School Leaving Certificate and hence the Immigration officials claimed that he would be looking for work. After much debate by myself with the Immigration officials, Ebrima was eventually allowed 24 hours in the UK after which time if he did not return to The Gambia he was liable to be deported<sup>15</sup>. This was a most unfortunate and unexpected consequence of a personal relationship in The Gambia. Hastrup's writing comes to mind:

'For all our rhetoric about dialogue, ethnographic practice implies intrusion and possibly pain' (Hastrup 1992;123).

My friendship with Ebrima was influenced by unjust international relations of power which were (and still are) painful. The vignette shows just how complex international fieldwork can become.

Considering the above dilemmas, Haw (1996) asks the question 'should the white researcher stay at home?' She eloquently sums up her answer to this question by stating that:

'It is about travelling sensitively, judiciously, continually being aware of your limitations, reflecting critically, making your limitations explicit and admitting when you are wrong. It is *not* about exploration aimed at colonisation. It is not a question of *whether* you travel and *where* you travel but *how* you go about it (Haw 1996;329).

For Haw the question became not whether the white researcher should stay at home, but rather *how* the white researcher goes about the research which involves *acknowledging limitations and proceeding cautiously*. Thus I took the

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<sup>15</sup> I have been in correspondence with my local Member of Parliament (Simon Hughes) concerning this incident and who has been most interested and helpful.

time to build up relationships with the teachers. The techniques I used are outlined in Chapter Four. In addition throughout the thesis I have acknowledged the partiality of the work based upon my ethnicity and gender.

In the following section I discuss a major tension which flows throughout the thesis, that of the similarities and differences between the Gambian teachers and myself.

## **2.6 *Similarities and differences between The Gambian teachers and myself***

In dialogue there were *similarities* between myself and Gambian teachers on personal and professional levels which *temporarily* bridged the divide of difference between us (Personal Narratives Group 1982; Day 1993; Rhodes 1994). We shared similarities of the teaching profession such as the difficulties of large class sizes, the importance of a well resourced classroom and the frustration with children's behaviour. We also discussed issues of cultural *difference* such as physical punishment which was frequently practised and upon which I avoided passing judgement. These conversations were inevitably stimulating and rewarding and led to reflexive thinking of our respective cultural differences.

Trinh<sup>16</sup> argues that in certain contexts, 'Self' and 'Other' can be intertwined and connected. This is the subtle and complex argument which calls for a continual

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<sup>16</sup> Trinh, a post-colonial critic, contends that the Western humanist project sought and attempted to construct absolutes and hence irreconcilable differences. These absolutes were falsely based upon notions of true essences and self. Post-structuralist arguments have, however, contested the notion of a true and fixed self arguing instead for our *multiple* identities. Post-structuralist theories of the multiple self allow Spivak, a post-colonial critic to say that it is 'a responsibility to trace the other in self' (Spivak 1990;47).

appreciation of sameness and difference between Self and Other. The skill is to see oneself in the other whilst respecting each others' differences (Spivak 1987). Despite the fact that I was given a Gambian name, Pa Momdou Sangang, which was used by the Lamin school teachers (where I did my fieldwork), the wider context of our different nationalities, religion, and language was ever present<sup>17</sup>. The similarities of shared professional identities were rarely, if ever, entirely divorced from the wider socio-economic context of difference in which we were both positioned (Hargreaves 1996).

### ***Conclusion***

Finally it is important to address the issue of 'academic neo-colonialism' in the production and distribution of knowledge. 'Academic neo-colonialism' is a form of cultural imperialism where 'the spoils are the capture of data and the enhancement of status of the researcher' in the world of international publication (Lewin in Vulliamy et al 1990;212). I will benefit from the doctorate and the publications. The thesis will reside in the University of Nottingham library in England. Perhaps, later, parts of the thesis will be published in journal articles where because of costs and accessibility, Gambian teachers and academics will probably not read them. It is important to note that the research was not

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<sup>17</sup> It is important to dispel any simplistic and romantic notions of similarities between myself and Gambian teachers. Concerning the construction of identity, Hall eloquently writes:

'Identities are constructed, through, not outside difference. This entails the radically disturbing recognition that it is only through the relation to the Other, the relation to what it is not, to precisely what it lacks....that the positive meaning of any term-and thus its identity- can be constructed' (Hall 1996;4).

This 'radically disturbing' notion that identities are constructed around what they are not, a negation of the Other, critiques simplified notions of similarities in cross-cultural research. Indeed Hall states that an identity *needs* the Other to come into being and into existence.



commissioned by the Gambian Ministry of Education but was written as a result of intellectual curiosity.

Hence it is ethically important that a copy of my thesis be delivered to The Gambia College Library in Brikama and The National Library of The Gambia in Banjul and any published articles are sent to the Ministry of Education. I have already begun this process of 'fair exchange' by sending copies of papers I have presented at two conferences to The Ministry of Education and the Master of Lamin School. I hope that Gambian teachers and academics find the thesis and the articles interesting and stimulating. I also hope that the thesis will contribute to the production of anti-racist knowledge in the ways outlined earlier in this chapter<sup>18</sup>.

Qualitative research is used because my anti-racist political standpoint encouraged *listening to and learning from* Gambian teachers. Rather than imputing my limited and culturally partial interpretations and understandings upon Gambian teachers, I wanted to record Gambian teachers' understandings of their professional concerns and issues.

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<sup>18</sup> This thesis is also contributing in a small way to Britain's development programme. I occasionally work as a trainer for Voluntary Services Overseas and have trained several hundred Volunteers including dozens of teachers, some of whom will be going to work in The Gambia and other West African countries. During this teacher training process I have heavily drawn on this research.

'If fools rush in where angels fear to tread, there has certainly been in the past no shortage of individual researchers, government agencies and international aid organisations ready to define problems and prescribe solutions according to their own priorities and their own cultural assumptions concerning how these may best be implemented' (in Crossley and Vulliamy 1998: xii).

Hence the appropriateness of the qualitative paradigm which has a commitment to seeking to understand the explanations and perceptions of those involved in the study. Use of the qualitative paradigm aims to avoid the 'cultural arrogance of Western experts' (Crossley and Vulliamy 1996:12) by privileging the insider's account. This thesis has attempted not to impose my Eurocentric values on Gambian teachers but rather listen to the cultural difference which they speak of. The following two chapters address the issues of my research methodology which arises out of my value position.

## ***Chapter Three***

### ***Quantitative and Qualitative Research Methodologies and Methods***

#### ***Introduction***

The thesis uses an overall qualitative methodology which respected the agency, views and beliefs of the Gambian teachers (Delamont 1992; Cohen & Manion 1994; Goodson 1995). This qualitative methodology was chosen because it suited the thesis' anti-racist political position outlined in the previous chapter. Within this qualitative methodological underpinning I used a variety of both qualitative and quantitative data collecting techniques for the purposes of generalisability and triangulation (Vulliamy 1990).

In this theoretical chapter I distance myself from the 'false divide' of the quantitative/qualitative argument (Bryman 1988). This argument is sometimes uncritically perceived as a 'good' qualitative side and a 'bad' quantitative side (Razak 1993). It is argued that this false dualism is based upon 'academic convention' rather than epistemological differences (Bryman 1988). I examine the debate which argues that this unnecessary duality is seen as generating 'oppositional poverty' (McLaughlin 1991).

With qualitative research methods the researcher is ideally perceived as able to get close to the researched and understand meanings from the point of view of those being studied. I examine the critiques of this somewhat romanticised view of the qualitative researcher (Hammersley 1992, Opie 1992, Clifford 1986 and Geertz 1973). I define some of the key terminology within qualitative research; ethnography, participant observation and symbolic interactionism. Ethnographic qualitative research is a wide-ranging term and includes the following techniques which I employed; reflexivity; case-study research; observation; interviewing; life history interviews and documentation (Woods 1988; Delamont 1992; Cohen & Manion 1994). These techniques allowed me to record the diversity and contradiction of Gambian teachers' lives (Evetts 1994 & 1996). I critique the supposed political neutrality of quantitative research methodology (Kuhn 1962; Bryman 1988; Delamont 1992; Opie 1992). Quantitative research is concerned with hypotheses and their measurement; causality; generalisations and replicability of findings.

### ***3.1 The Perceived Differences between Qualitative and Quantitative Research***

In the 1960's and 1970's it was generally believed that only quantitative scientific research methods could produce 'true' knowledge about the 'real' world and how it worked (Bryman 1988). However, Kuhn's (1962) radical critique of science stated that science operated within a scientific *paradigm*. This scientific paradigm only allowed for certain questions to be asked and the results to be interpreted in a specific scientific way. Kuhn argued that other paradigms could ask different questions and thus get different results. Thus Kuhn critiqued the epistemological base of scientific research (Bryman 1988).

In addition during the 1960's and 1970's feminism, post modernism, post structuralism and phenomenology, with significant differences between them questioned much of the philosophical assumptions concerning quantitative research (Hammersley 1992). Much of the literature prior to the mid 1970's on social science methodology afforded scant attention to qualitative research. (Bryman 1988;2). During the 1980's however there was an acceptance of the value of qualitative research within educational sociology. Qualitative research was no longer confined to anthropology and had lost most of its 'Cinderella status' (McLaughlin 1991).

Those advocating qualitative research argued that the social sciences, by

uncritically adopting a natural science model and using a quantitative research methodology, did not recognise the fundamental differences between people and the objects of the natural sciences. It was argued that people had special characteristics and could not be quantitatively analysed and measured in the same way as natural science objects. Hence quantitative and qualitative research began to be perceived by some as inhabiting different epistemological paradigms (Bryman 1988).

According to Bryman (1988) this so-called dichotomy reflects academic convention rather than opposed epistemological positions.

'The tendency to associate particular methods with particular epistemological positions is little more than a convention (which took root in the 1960's) but which has little to recommend it, either as a description of the research process or as a prescriptive view of how research ought to be done' (Bryman 1988;125).

Bryman (1988) Vulliamy (1990) and McLaughlin (1991) see the two research methodologies as *genres* and frameworks, each having its own preoccupations and ways of presenting its data. The false dichotomy exaggerates the differences between qualitative and quantitative methods.

This duality tends to separate researchers into two distinct camps; those *for* one methodology and *against* the other. Thus an *uncritical* simplistic notion of a 'good side' with emotions, stories, narratives, nature and spontaneity is posited against the so-called 'bad side' of positivism, empiricism and science (Razak 1993).

There is an assumption that the living voices of the oppressed express a 'truth' which will win out in this argument. Silverman (1985) warns that such dualistic thinking rarely 'captures' the complexity of the social world. In contrast to the divergent epistemologies of quantitative and qualitative research methodologies, Bryman (1988) and Vulliamy (1990) state that a marriage between qualitative and quantitative *techniques* can occur in social science research. In the following section I discuss some of the key terms associated with qualitative research.

### ***3.2 Phenomenology, Participant Observation, Symbolic Interactionism and Grounded Theory***

Qualitative research has its epistemological underpinnings in Husserl's and Schutz's phenomenology (Bryman 1988) and Blumer's (1969) symbolic interactionism. Phenomenology in its broadest sense is concerned with the phenomena of *experience* rather than external and objective reality. Phenomenology often means a general commitment to looking at the *everyday* world from an actor's point of view and the *interpretations and meanings* the actors attribute to their behaviour (Cohen and Manion 1994). Bogdan and Taylor state:

'The phenomenologist views human behaviour ...as a product of how people interpret their world. The task of the phenomenologist, and for us, the qualitative methodologists, is to capture this process of interpretation...in order to grasp the meanings of a person's behaviour, the phenomenologist attempts to see things from that person's point of view (Bogdan & Taylor 1982;37).

Phenomenology and thus qualitative research is concerned with people's *interpretations* of their world. Phenomenology partly derives from the discipline of social anthropology and it requires the researcher to literally mix with the people as a participant observer.

Participant observation entails the sustained 'immersion' of the researcher among the informants (Delamont 1992). Thus ideally by using the intensive methods of participant observation, the ethnographer can go beyond superficial layers and generalised descriptions of the culture to underlying notions of the actors meaning and interpretations (Woods 1986). In order to understand the meanings of events the ethnographer attempts to see the events through the eyes of the participants.

Symbolic interactionism, which developed from the Chicago School of Sociology over the first four decades of this century (Ball 1993), is primarily concerned with the interpretation of the world as a social act. Interactionism is closely linked with participant observation and reflexivity. During the process of observation and interviewing, the ethnographer interacts with the respondents. Interactionism is concerned with the elucidation of interpretations *in specific contexts*. Herbert Blumer depicts symbolic interactionism as

'Human beings act towards things on the basis of the meanings the things have for them.....the meaning of such things is derived



from the social interaction that one has with one's fellows.....these meanings are handled in and modified through an interpretative process used by the person in dealing with the things he encounters' (Blumer 1969;34).

Thus interactionism is primarily a process of social interpretation.

During the processes of participant observation and interactionism the ethnographer, derives and induces theory *from* the fieldwork process and data.

This idea of 'grounded theory' was first formulated by Glaser and Strauss (1967) as a means of generating theory which was embedded in data. Thus within the grounded theory approach knowledge is built up from the ethnographic experiences with the participants.

My research moved back and forth between theory and its reformulation, data collection and its interpretation and the further questioning of theory whilst reliving and reworking the fieldwork experiences (see Chapter Four).

My research was a continually shifting and fragmented process. More or less at the same time I accumulated a variety of 'diverse slices of data' (Glaser and Strauss 1967;66). Whilst collecting this diverse and fragmented data I interrogated it with previously held theories about teachers' professional lives and careers. In the following sections I examine the problems of ethnographic interpretations.

### ***3.3 Ethnographic 'Thick Descriptions'***

Qualitative research is seen as untrustworthy since it relies upon the subjective idiosyncrasies and anecdotes of the researcher and is difficult to replicate (Bryman 1988;77). However once it is accepted that ethnography sometimes consists of subjective anecdotes 'a rigorous sense of partiality can be a source of representational tact' (Clifford 1986;7). This 'rigorous sense of partiality' is Opie's (1992) reflexive 'political and ideological positioning'. In Chapter Two I established the thesis' political positioning.

An interpretative ethnography perceives people as living within stories which they themselves have written and act out (Geertz 1973). From amongst a collection of potential stories, people select and decide to give value and meaning only to specific stories. If an ethnographer wants to understand the selected stories of the respondents then he or she must attempt to do so from the actors and actresses point of view. Of course the ethnographer can never actually enter into the respondents world, but merely peer and strain over the shoulders of the respondents to try to read their story from afar (Geertz 1973). The 'thicker' (Geertz 1973) the description of the context within which the story is told, the more likely that an ethnographer's understandings will be closer to the respondent's interpretation of their story.

'Cultural analysis is guessing at meanings, assessing the guesses, and drawing explanatory conclusions from the better

guesses, not discovering the Continent of Meaning and mapping out its bodiless landscape' (Geertz 1973;20).

Ethnography should not therefore be looking for 'true' explanations or absolutes but assessing its 'better guesses'. Geertz argues that these 'better guesses' are produced by a 'thick description'.

Ethnographic 'thick descriptions' are produced by long-term, mainly qualitative, and almost 'obsessively fine-comb' field study in confined contexts (Geertz 1973).

In the following section I explore critical social anthropology's response to the phenomenological and ethnographic debate. Gambian cultural norms, discourses and their interpretations are multiple and diverse. In addition Gambian cultural discourses are different from my European discourses. Hence it is important to have a critical understanding of culture.

### ***3.4 Interpretative Ethnographic Analysis of Cultures***

Geertz (1973) defines culture as 'webs of significance' which people spin and in which they are suspended. Thus people actively generate their own cultures and impute them with their meanings and values. The ethnographer in turn interprets the respondent's 'web of significance'. Thus according to Geertz, ethnography is the *creation* of the ethnographers' interpretations which are in turn built upon the respondents' interpretations of their cultural practices.

'The culture of a people is an ensemble of texts, themselves ensembles, which the anthropologist strains to read over the shoulders of those to whom they properly belong' (Geertz 1973;452).

Rebel argues that the respondents culture is opaque and is 'ineffable to the people themselves' (Rebel 1989;123). Thus culture is *ambiguous* even to the people who live within a particular culture<sup>19</sup>.

'People themselves claim that they no longer understand what is happening to them, much less that they have mastered the ins-and-outs of the processes in which they are implicated' (Mbembe & Roitman 1995).

### ***3.5 The Crisis within Interpretative Ethnography***

Denzin (1997) states that interpretative ethnography currently is in crisis and is characterised by a process of intense reflection and the production 'messy texts'. These 'messy texts' reject the realist ethnographic narratives encouraged by Malinowski, who was one of the founders of ethnography. Malinowski's ethnographies made claim to textual authority. The 'messy texts' for which Denzin argues are characterised by a politicised, critical self-reflexive account which 'reads ethnography back through itself' (Denzin 1997;250). Denzin

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<sup>19</sup> The dramatic socio-political watershed of the July 22nd Coup had occurred some 18 months earlier and its continuing effects were perplexing and confusing to some of the teachers. Some of the teachers were unsure about what the socio-political changes would mean for them and their families personally and professionally.

centrally identifies the current crisis of ethnography as being located in its representation and legitimisation. This crisis is embedded within the academic frameworks of post-structuralism and postmodernism. His critique builds upon Clifford & Marcus (1986) experimental ethnography.

At the heart of Clifford's critique is that writing itself, a central aspect of the representation of ethnographic work, is a creative, subjective and interpretative process. Clifford (1986) refers to ethnographic texts as 'partial, incomplete serious fictions' which are 'made up'. Thus Clifford critiqued the rational, objective and factual basis upon which ethnography was predicated. Rather he saw ethnographies as 'fictions of dialogue which invent things not actually real' (1986;6).

'The focus on text making and rhetoric serves to highlight the constructed, artificial nature of cultural accounts...It draws attention to the historical predicament of ethnography, the fact that it is always caught up in invention, not the representation of cultures' (Clifford 1986;2)

Clifford challenged the borders and boundaries of traditional ethnography. His scathing attack upon ethnography's epistemological ability to represent others was vilified and ridiculed (Denzin 1997). Denzin argues we must rethink Clifford's ethnographic experiments as being more than simply narcissistic and self-indulgent efforts. Denzin agrees with Clifford that ethnography tells us more about the ethnographer than the people being studied.

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John and Jean Comaroff (1992) note that ethnography 'does not speak for others but about them'. Ethnographic writing no matter how lucid and creative can never 'capture' other people's reality.

Whilst acknowledging Clifford's and Denzin's critique of ethnography, it is important to hold onto some middle ground concerning material reality. Denzin (1992;158) stated that 'there was an obdurate world out there'. Thus concerning postcolonial women's lives Mohanty states:

'Distinction needs to be made between the material reality of women's lives and the general discursive representations of those lives' (Mohanty 1996;188).

I feel that it is important to acknowledge both the textual narrative of people's lives and *at the same time* acknowledge their material reality. Thus I have embedded my ethnography with a rich contextualisation of the material reality of Gambian teachers' lives and careers. A further key concept of ethnography is reflexivity.

### **3.6 *Ethnographic Reflexivity***

Norman Denzin (1997) provocatively opens his book with a definition of ethnography as primarily concerning the ethnographer him/herself.

‘Ethnography is that form of inquiry and writing that produces descriptions and accounts about the ways of life of the writer and those written about’ (Denzin 1997;xi).

For Denzin the practice of ethnography, as it articulates with poststructuralist and postmodernist perspectives, concerns first the researcher and secondly the respondents. Thus according to Denzin’s definition of ethnography, reflexive autobiographical writing is at the heart of ethnography. In a similar way Connelly and Clandinin (1990) note that ethnographic narrative becomes a ‘collaborative story’. This collaborative story is created by the intersubjectivity between the ethnographer and the respondent. The research is thus a collaborative document, created out of the lives of both the ethnographer and the respondents (Connelly and Clandinin 1990).

The reflexive process is enhanced through the keeping of ‘creative’ personal field notes and diaries (Okely 1994). The five field notebooks in which I reflected upon my feelings and interactions with Gambian teachers testify to my belief in the reflexive process.

'The research has combined action and contemplation....Writing and analysis comprise a movement between the tangible and the intangible, between the cerebral and sensual, between the visual and the invisible' (Okely 1994;32).

In the diaries I contemplated the sights, sounds and smells which I experienced in The Gambia. In the fieldnotes memories, music and feelings were intermingled with interviews. During the writing-up of this research I have 'relived and reworked' the fieldnotes and diaries which I kept. Such reflexivity and reliving of the fieldwork experience during writing-up is subjective and may appear to the professional positivist as 'chaos' (Okely 1994). Reflexivity in the research process may also help to mitigate the writers inadvertent 'appropriation' of the data (Opie 1992).

Opie (1992) argues that qualitative research may liberate by giving 'voice' and space to the invisible 'other' but that such research may also 'appropriate' the data to suit the researcher's purposes. Appropriation occurs when the experiences of the 'colonised' are *re-presented* and interpreted to justify and validate ideological positions held by the 'coloniser' (Said 1978). Thus:

'...other significant experiential elements which partially disrupt or challenge that interpretation may also be silenced' (Opie 1992;52).

For Opie (1992) such appropriation occurs through a process of the researcher's



interpretation and hence to some extent is unavoidable. Opie states that the processes of reflexivity and acknowledging the research's limitations helps to alleviate appropriation. In the following section I further describe the value of ethnographic fieldwork.

### ***3.7 Personal Narratives, Life histories and The Value of Contradiction within Life History***

The method of 'personal narrative' (Connelly and Clandinin 1990) and life history is apt for my ideological objectives which wish to show Gambian teachers being active in the creation and interpretation of their lives and careers.

'Personal narratives of non-dominant social groups are often particularly effective sources of counterhegemonic insight because they expose the viewpoint embedded in dominant ideology as particularist rather than universal and because they reveal the reality of a life which defies or contradicts the rules' (Personal Narratives Group 1989;7).

The Personal Narratives Group (1989) use the terminology of 'narrator and interpreter'. Identifying the Gambian teacher as the 'narrator' of their life history emphasises the pro-active agency of the teacher, both within their lived reality and within the dynamics of the interview. The role of the researcher as an 'interpreter' of the narration, is intellectually and emotionally honest, since these terms recognise the subjectivity of the writer who is not just recording and transcribing but rather interpreting and creating text.

According to Delamont (1992) much of the force of qualitative argument comes from attention to contrasts, paradoxes and contradictions. Opie (1992) argues that contradiction within the interviewee's text should be acknowledged and analysed.

'Acknowledgement of contradiction challenges the notion of rationality, affirms instead a much more unstable, decentred notion of self and calls for the representation of this self within the written text' (Opie 1992;60).

By drawing out the life historian's contradictory, paradoxical and recursive characteristics portrays them as complete and whole. It is interesting to note that recursive and contradictory statements may only be fleeting and momentary and hence would not be considered valid in quantitative research which valorises the quantity of occurrences. Mbilinyi (1989) who carried out life history work in East Africa, was 'thunderstruck' when the life historian she was interviewing challenged one of her political axioms. Mbilinyi realised that she had been searching for "exemplary lives", lives which reflected her own ideological positioning, and she writes that she felt 'let down'.

'I gradually accepted the fact that there was no one outlook, that the narrator of the life history represented a set of contradictions and that somehow I was going to have to present all the contradictions' (Mbilinyi 89;218).

Thus the researcher who is conducting life history work should not be attempting

to find narrators or life historians who reflect their own world view but rather be prepared to accept divergent perspectives. It is critical to accept that Gambian teachers do not speak with a unified voice. Thus the strategy of empowerment through dialogue and 'voice' does not work as 'neatly' as they are supposed to because there is no unity amongst 'the oppressed' (Razak 1993). The role of contradiction is therefore paramount in life history work.

In the following section I examine the main concerns of quantitative research and discuss some the arguments surrounding a quantitative research methodology. Within an overall qualitative framework I used quantitative techniques at The Gambia College because it was useful in testing the validity of my preliminary hypotheses. The questionnaire helped with the preliminary focus upon the research topic and was useful in triangulating the research (see Chapter 4).

### ***3.8 The Theoretical Concerns of Quantitative Research***

Quantitative research formulates explicit propositions or hypotheses about the topic in question and tends to design instruments, surveys and questionnaires. Surveys are designed in order to specifically test the propositions which are then seen as either valid or false. This is ideally seen as a 'rational and linear process' although the reality is more 'messy' (Bryman 1988;19). Such quantitative methods are based upon the positivist philosophy of empiricism which only perceives data which is experiential and observable as valid. Hence within

empiricism there is little overt room for subjectivity on the part of the researcher or the researched. The researcher is to be 'purged' of his or her personal predilections and hence it is assumed that the observations will be neutral and value-free. Hence the supposed ideological neutrality and objectivity of the positivist researcher metaphorically working in a political and cultural vacuum has come under severe criticism (Okely 1994, Hammersley 1992, Opie 1992, Said 1979, Clifford 1986). In Chapter Two I acknowledged the gendered and Eurocentric perspective of the research. Moreover the questionnaire is placed within an overall qualitative research context.

Quantitative research may be seen to be preoccupied with propositions and their measurement (Delamont 1992). The propositions are ideally seen as deductively stemming from theory, however, the reality is once again rather different than the ideal. The indictment is that although explicit hypotheses are central to the research, they are loosely connected to theoretical considerations. Quantitative research sometimes presents a weak account of how its hypotheses came into being (Bryman 1988;21).

A further pre-occupation of quantitative research is that of establishing the causal relationships between concepts. The researcher tries to establish associations and cause and effect relationships between the variables on the questionnaire. Statistical techniques such as chi-square and correlation coefficients are used to establish the connections. Quantitative research stipulates that the findings must

be replicable beyond the research's immediate locality. This romantic pre-occupation stems from a desire to try to produce the law-like findings of the natural sciences. Another researcher using roughly the same questionnaire *should* be able to replicate the original findings. According to Bryman (1988) replication is not often done in practice and its prominence is often exaggerated.

Quantitative research sometimes treats the *individual* as opposed to the wider contextual society as the focus for empirical inquiry (Delamont 1992). Hence society is seen as being comprised of a collection of disparate individuals. Therefore a questionnaire might be completed by individuals and these singular responses are statistically connected.

### ***Conclusion***

Educational research in developing countries has traditionally been characterised by the development of standardised tests and questionnaires and the statistical analysis of large samples (Vulliamy 1990). Through its recent concern with context, however, international education has much in common with qualitative research (Crossley and Vulliamy 1997). This research is no exception to that trend and The Gambia's political, historical and social context is constantly referred to.

This chapter has shown that it is possible both theoretically and practically to adopt a multi-methods approach to research. However, my research was *predominately* ethnographic, in that, I wanted to understand what discourses

constituted and sustained Gambian teachers. Within the constraints of ethnography outlined in this chapter an ethnographic approach allowed me to scratch the surface of what it was 'to be' a Gambian teacher (Nias 1989). Within this overall qualitative framework the questionnaires were used at a specific point in the research to help with the preliminary focusing of the qualitative research. Additionally questionnaires were used at The Gambia College because the context lent itself to quantitative data collection. As a teacher trainer I had access to hundreds of student teachers and in my classes I made the time to conduct the questionnaires. Thus the questionnaire data was a useful step within the overall qualitative process. Stephens noted

'I wanted the qualitative analysis to take precedence over the quantitative and for the latter to be interpreted in a qualitative manner' (Stephens in Vulliamy et al 1990:219).

My use of multi-methods adopted a similar perspective. The statistical results of the questionnaires were interpreted within the cultural context of The Gambia College and The Gambia. The questionnaire data was useful in highlighting the generalisability of crude analytic categories. In-depth ethnographic fieldwork was necessary to understand the *processes*, complexities and contradictions within each of the analytic categories. Although useful within the overall research framework the questionnaires could not explain complex cultural *processes*. Thus the questionnaires had a specific but limited function within the research.

By focusing upon the actual *processes* of schooling, qualitative research is

useful in highlighting unintended consequences and contradictions of policy innovations.

'By concentrating on the 'phenomenology of change' qualitative research strategies have a vital role to play in contributing to our understanding of the processes of educational change in developing countries' (Vulliamy 1990;20).

Qualitative research can draw attention to how teachers actually *experience and manage* the problems, paradoxes and contradictions of educational innovation and change. My research in The Gambia recorded the *diversity* of teachers' experiences when encountering changes. Such diversity is reflective of the complexities of Gambian teachers' lives and careers.

## Chapter Four

### *Negotiating entry and data collection and analysis*

#### *Introduction*

From my arrival in The Gambia in September 1993 I was interested in conducting PhD research and begun to contemplate the possibility of doing a PhD on an aspect of The Gambian education system. I appreciated how unique my position as a VSO (Voluntary Services Overseas) Teacher Trainer was and that the position afforded me unparalleled insights into the Gambian education system<sup>20</sup>. As a result of the Gambian context I knew the research to be original and because my position afforded me access to different educational institutions (primary and secondary schools and contacts in the Ministry of Education) I believed the research to be feasible. VSO had ensured all formal access to the country and to the job itself and had even arranged an intensive month of formal language training<sup>21</sup>.

I engaged in two distinct but related periods of Gambian fieldwork and this chapter is structured according to the chronology of these two data collecting

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<sup>20</sup> As a teacher trainer at The Gambia College who subsequently became engaged in ethnographic research, I was a 'complete participant' as opposed to a 'complete observer' (Hammersley and Atkinson 1987). I explained to my colleagues and the students that I was carrying out research whilst I worked at The Gambia College.

<sup>21</sup> The *lingua franca* in The Gambia is English. Hence at The Gambia College I taught and socialised in English but in the town I predominately spoke Mandinka. In Nigeria, Stephens



periods (see Tables 1.1 and 1.2). The first data collection period was whilst I was a teacher trainer at The Gambia College (September 1993-June 1995) and the second data collection period was during the 1996/1997 winter when I carried out ethnographic fieldwork in one primary school (Lamin school). The research at Lamin primary school was only possible because whilst I was at The Gambia College I worked with local primary schools, including Lamin primary school. Thus in this chapter I firstly discuss the data collection and analysis whilst I was at The Gambia College. Secondly, I discuss the issues of access and ethnographic data collection and analysis whilst in Lamin primary School (see Table 4.1). The triangulation techniques which provide validity and reliability for the research are described towards the end of the research.

I discuss the complex issues of power in the interviewing process. I argue that power between the researcher and researched is not fixed but constantly shifts, depending upon the topic being discussed and the context in which the interview occurs. I discuss the complex dilemmas of reciprocity and 'pay-back' for Lamin Primary School and the teachers (Mirza 1995).

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(1990) noted that experiences in which English featured, such as education, would best be recalled in that language. Hence my ethnographic fieldwork was conducted primarily in English.

#### **4.1 Observational data collection and building up relationships with Gambia College Colleagues**

During my first year at The Gambia College I was unfamiliar with the culture and hence engaged in 'general scanning' and 'unfocused watching' (Delamont 1992;112) both inside and outside the College. The first crucial lesson I learnt from the observational process of 'general scanning' was that culturally an ambience of '*domang, domang*' or 'slowly, slowly' is pervasive in The Gambia. The words '*domang, domang*' are frequently used by Gambians when in conversation. Similarly in Nigeria (Stephens in Vulliamy 1990) found that it was important to 'waste time' with colleagues.

Thus when not teaching or researching or marking I would 'waste time' in the staffroom observing my colleagues and building up relationships with them. 'Wasting time' with my colleagues proved to be extremely valuable since during the process of socialising together over a coffee we built up *trust* together. I plied my colleagues with lots of questions eager to learn all I could about The Gambian education system and the wider cultural context. I listened to their professional problems and issues of concern. These discussions helped me in my work as a teacher trainer and were most useful in focusing upon possible research areas. We talked about the student teachers and the college; Islamic education; the costs of schooling; the political situation; gender expectations and the differences between rural and urban households. These informal 'chats' led to invitations to

Islamic baby naming ceremonies (when the baby is one week old its name is made public); parties; eating with colleagues' families; games of Scrabble; and trips to the beach. A lasting relationship developed with one colleague because I asked him where he got his beautiful shirt. This led to a series of shopping trips together to buy cloth and to the tailor who hand made the shirt.

In Nigeria Stephens (in Vulliamy 1990;131) noted the 'constant adjustment to timetables to accommodate unforeseen events.' Similarly in The Gambia planning work (teaching and research) ahead had to be seen in a provisional light. The country celebrated both Christian and Muslim holidays, many of which were movable feasts. Students needed time to travel to their relatives for these holidays and hence teaching time was frequently lessened. Hot and humid weather in the summer months made it almost impossible for me to work after lunch. In addition during the summer I became sick with malaria and missed several weeks of teaching. In addition staff meetings were frequently called at very short notice (usually the same day) and could be protracted events.

#### ***4.2 Unstructured data analysis at The Gambia College and the preliminary focus upon the student teachers***

During this early part of the research my data analysis took place alongside the data collection (Burgess, 1984). I did this by re-reading my notes and diaries in an informal manner. This period of 'unfocused watching' at the Gambia College was critical in learning Gambian cultural mores and values.

Reading through my notes and diaries I noticed that I had mentioned several topics which could possibly be the focus of the research (see Table 1.2). These included the following issues: Considering that so many children dropped out of education before reaching High School why did poor parents continue to send their children to school? Why was the enrolment rate declining in some rural areas and increasing in urban areas? Why was the use of classroom chanting and choral repetition so widespread amongst teachers? What effect did teacher training have upon changing the practices of Gambia College student teachers? I also considered an investigation into Islamic education in The Gambia.

As I reflected upon these potentially interesting research topics practical issues such as language, travel and accessibility began to impinge upon my research options. I realised that attempting to ask head of households (male and female) about their decisions concerning their offspring's education would necessitate my speaking excellent Mandinka. This potential research topic would also depend

upon the Head of Households being willing to discuss these sensitive issues with an outsider. I was aware that my knowledge of Islam was insufficient to pursue research in Islamic schools. Travel to and accommodation in rural areas in The Gambia was practically time consuming and most uncomfortable. I gradually realised that the best context in which to conduct my research was to be at or near The Gambia College where I was known and had a good network of friends. I also had access to a large pool of student teachers.

Hence during my second year at The Gambia College I began to narrow my focus and field of observation to the student teachers themselves. Since I worked closely with them and had good access to their time and their opinions my research gradually began to take shape with the students in mind. From informal discussions with my colleagues and the students themselves I began to develop an understanding of the students concerns, their motivations and their ambitions.

#### ***4.3 Documentary data collection at The Gambia College***

Whilst at The Gambia College I collected documentary evidence about The Gambian demographic situation and the socio-political context. In The Gambia documents are often produced in small quantities and it proved difficult to locate certain documents. Concerning Gambian documentary research Sarr notes,

'It was necessary to search hard, often through contacts and acquaintances, as well as libraries, to trace things

through and this absorbed a lot of time' (Sarr and Lewin 1991; 211).

It was necessary to work through my networks of colleagues and friends to identify the locations of certain documents. I traced Gambian macro level documents to an office on the top floor of the Central Bank in Banjul (the capital). This project was examining the Social dimensions of World Bank structural adjustment<sup>22</sup>. This documentary evidence was extremely valuable in contextualising the oral data I had been told by my Gambian College colleagues. I also made several trips to the Ministry of Education in Banjul to collect the annual education statistics. This included useful data such as the numbers of children enrolling by gender and region and the numbers of unqualified teachers in the system.

#### ***4.4 Data collection using the questionnaire***

Whilst teaching at The Gambia College I had informal discussions with lecturers and students about student teachers' motivations for joining the teaching profession (see Table 1.2; Phase Two). I had also begun discussions concerning student teachers general levels of satisfaction with teaching. Following these discussions I began to hypothesise that one of the major reasons for these student teachers joining and subsequently staying in the teaching profession was the goal of Gambian national development. I also hypothesised that the student teachers

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<sup>22</sup> I had several illuminating discussions with the Director of the project on the effects of Structural Adjustment upon Gambian education.

were generally satisfied with their chosen profession but at this stage was unsure why. I wanted to establish the validity of my 'informal hunches and ideas' (Hammersley and Atkinson 1987). A large scale questionnaire would fulfil the aims of finding out whether my informal observations were valid. The questionnaire was aimed at crudely eliciting the student teachers' motivations for joining the teaching profession and their attitudes towards teaching through the use of ranking exercises.

The format, style and questions of the self completion questionnaire were based upon a survey with primary and secondary teachers in Tanzania (Carr-Hill 1990). Carr-Hill's questionnaire focused upon the living and working conditions of Tanzanian teachers as well as their motivations in joining and staying in the teaching profession. I adapted the questionnaire to focus upon Gambian teachers' motivations and how they perceived teaching in terms of its professional status and importance (See Appendix Six for a copy of my questionnaire). However, the students told me that the pilot questionnaire was too complicated. Hence I wrote a simpler questionnaire which I administered at the end of the summer term to the one hundred and eighty one primary student teachers in the English classes I taught. To ensure a good response rate from the student teachers they were asked to complete it during one of my English lessons. At the beginning of the lesson I explained that I was interested in their opinions of the teaching profession and would be taking the questionnaires back to England. I read through the questionnaire with the students and explained how

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to complete it. Some of the students told me that they were pleased that I was taking their opinions and concerns to a University in England.

An initial scan of the questionnaires did indeed verify my observation that national development was of central concern to the student teachers<sup>23</sup>. The questionnaire revealed that some of my initial hunches and hypotheses concerning Gambian teachers were valid. Glancing through the questionnaires I noted that student teachers were generally satisfied with their future teaching salaries. Interestingly most student teachers felt that teaching was a respected profession. I followed up ten of the students with informal chats asking them to explain their answers to me. These discussions highlighted the complexity of the issues which the simplistic questionnaire did not allow for. I realised that I would have to return to The Gambia to pursue in-depth ethnographic work and detailed interviews if I were to properly research and contextualise Gambian teachers' lives.

Leaving The Gambia College was a sad experience because I had enjoyed the teaching and friendships. I returned to England and won a studentship to carry out research on Gambian teachers' lives and careers at the University of Nottingham. Twelve months later, after widely reading about teachers' lives and careers, I returned to The Gambia to conduct ethnographic fieldwork. This time I did not have the support of Voluntary Services Overseas in securing me work visas and accommodation. In the following sections I describe the issues of

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<sup>23</sup> At Nottingham University I gave the questionnaires to a research assistant who formally conducted an SPSS analysis. The results of this analysis are discussed in Chapter Nine.



access to The Gambia as a lone researcher.

#### ***4.5 Gaining Entry into The Republic of The Gambia***

In order to gain access to The Gambia to carry out qualitative research I had to be carefully prepared in advance. Research can be critical of established policies and I was aware that the then new military Government led by Chairman Jammeh, now President Jammeh, was highly sensitive to potential criticism by outsiders. In 1996 Chairman Jammeh's government was trying to secure the reinstatement of donor aid from America and the European Union. Concerning qualitative research in developing countries Vulliamy notes,

'Qualitative research methodologies are often viewed as posing particular problems of political acceptability, because they tend to probe sensitivities which can safely be avoided or buried in the apparent neutrality of numbers' (Vulliamy 1990;22).

Hence four months before leaving for The Gambia I had written introduction letters to officials in the Ministry of Education. This letter of introduction outlined who I was and my research proposal and asked for official permission to carry out the research. The letter had been counter-signed by the Professors of Education at Nottingham University. Unfortunately the only reply I got was from the Deputy British High Commissioner concerning the possibility of accommodation. I

received nothing from the Gambian Ministry of Education officials concerning my research and my anxiety around the possibility of carrying out the research *at all* was heightened by this silence from the Ministry. I was aware that because of the fast changing political situation within The Gambia that the research might not be possible.

I was aware that because there had been a military coup only two years previously, the new regime might be highly suspicious of my purposes in The Gambia. This may seem paranoid, however, in 1984 a Marxist military coup was thwarted by members of the British Army Special Air Service (SAS) who gained entry to The Gambia pretending to be tourists. In 1996 there was a different political situation in The Gambia. The point to be made is that there exists a delicate relationship between Britain and The Gambia, as with many former British colonies (see Chapter Two). This sensitive relationship had recently been highlighted by the British Government's hostile reaction to Jammeh's new military government of the Armed Forces Provisional Ruling Council (AFPRC).

#### ***4.6 My anxiety concerning the research***

I was also most anxious that I had no permission to carry out research in The Gambia and was aware of the sensitive context within which my visit took place. Once in The Gambia I would have none of the emotional and physical support of the University. I had a four month return ticket and my primary research question

but I didn't really know how long I was going to be in The Gambia or what I was going to be allowed to do. My best chance for gaining permission to carry out the research was my connections within the Ministry and the school system. I hoped that they would still be in their positions.

My anxiety concerning entry into The Gambia was justified. On the Friday that I arrived in The Gambia a military invasion and attempted counter-coup had occurred up-country at Georgetown. Several hundred returning soldiers from the Liberian conflict, who had grudges against Chairman Jammeh, had invaded The Gambia by crossing the border with Senegal. The military commander at Georgetown and several soldiers had been shot. Considerable amounts of weapons and ammunition had been stolen. My friends who had come to collect me at Yundum airport informed me that I was lucky that my plane had been allowed to land.

#### ***4.7 Gaining Permission for the research from the Ministry of Education, Banjul***

Gaining access from the Ministry of Education to carry out the research in the case-study school was relatively unproblematic. I was lucky to find that my contacts within the Ministry were still in their posts. In retrospect I realise that access to the case-study school was entirely dependent upon my previous work experience and contacts in the Ministry of Education. These had been

established whilst I was an education lecturer at The Gambia College. Like Lewin (in Vulliamy 1990) I knew that the research had to be officially sanctioned and not designed to expose sensitive issues that had not been approved.

Formal access to carry out qualitative research was dependent upon my previous good working relationship with the head of the then British Overseas Development Agency in The Gambia. His connections and experience gained during twenty years in The Gambia were invaluable. On my behalf he spoke to the Deputy Chief Education Officer (DCEO). As a 'gatekeeper' (Hammersley and Atkinson 1983) gaining permission from the DCEO was critical. Through his secretary I made an appointment to see him and discuss the research. I was lucky<sup>24</sup> enough to see him the following day. I came away from the Ministry in my first week of the field trip with official authorisation to carry out any educational research I choose in any school in the country. Such generous permission might well have been impossible without my previous experience and connections within the Ministry of Education.

Formal access for my research had been granted from the Ministry of Education but I still had to gain informed consent and trust from a headteacher and their staff. I was aware of Vulliamy's caution concerning the hierarchy of granting research permission,

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<sup>24</sup> Whilst waiting downstairs in the lobby I realised how lucky I was to have a meeting with him. I met several of my former Gambia College students who had been waiting days to see Ministry officials concerning lack of a post and non-payment of salaries.

'In research settings there tends to be a hierarchy of consent, whereby those in positions of power grant permission for research to be done on individuals lower down the hierarchy...this can lead to understandable resentment which can only be overcome by researchers very careful management of their role' (Vulliamy 1990;40).

I knew that in choosing a case study school and seeking access that I would have to be sensitive to the headteacher with whom the Ministry had now been given me permission to work. In the following section I discuss how I located the research school and how I carefully and humbly negotiated my position as an official researcher.

#### ***4.8 Negotiating Access to a School through the Principal Regional Education Officer and Attempting to Achieve the Headteacher's and Teacher's Trust***

Within a West African context showing respect and politeness to people in authority and elders is tremendously valued (Stephens 1990). From my experience at The Gambia College in attempting to access resources I knew that unless I went through an often quite elaborate process of greetings, 'chats', salutations and deference that I would not get whatever it was that I needed. From my two year experience at The Gambia College I was also aware that when requesting a favour from somebody it was more polite to check out the request

through a third party. If the request was refused this would save the person the embarrassment of turning down your request themselves.

With this experience of showing respect to people in authority I knew that if I directly approached a headteacher myself I might at first be accepted but later find the research blocked because I had missed out a key person in the hierarchy of authority. Therefore by directly asking the headteacher myself might be deemed impolite in a culture where respect to be one's elders is of paramount importance. Bearing this cultural process in mind, which one could only know after living and working in the context, I respectfully approached the next link in the education hierarchy, the region's Principal Education Officer (PEO). I showed the PEO my permission letter from the Ministry and he asked if I had a school in mind in which I would like to conduct my research. I told him the headteacher I wished to work with and inquired of his whereabouts.

I knew the headteacher that I wanted to work with. He was an older man who was charming and intelligent, professional and dedicated to improving schools. He was most welcoming and friendly towards me and prepared to share of his knowledge and time. As a lecturer on Teaching Practice observation I always opted to observe the students placed within his school. During my two years as a lecturer I had built up a good working relationship with the headteacher known as 'Master'<sup>25</sup>.

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<sup>25</sup> Interestingly 'The Master' is a 'cultural archetype' of teaching. 'Master' comes from Latin *dominus* meaning head of household (Sugrue 1996). The manner in which Master carried

To my delight the PEO informed me that Master not only was still working as a headteacher but had been given a bigger school in the town in which I previously lived. I had lived in the compound directly opposite the school for nearly two years when I was a lecturer. I used to jog around the school's large compound in the cool early mornings before going to the College. I can say with confidence that I knew the physical and cultural context in which the school lay.

The PEO informed me that he was paying a visit to the school and would inform Master of my intentions. The PEO kindly played the role of an intermediary between myself and Master. An hour later the PEO returned and his driver took me to Master's school in the Ministry's car. Hence I arrived at the school in the PEO's car which added further official approval to my research.

I now had successfully gained official access to a case-study school. In the following sections I describe how a broader definition of access, one that incorporated a relationship of trust between the teachers and myself was on-going (Delamont 1992). Hence relationship issues of 'access', trust and dependability between myself and the teachers is not simply negotiated once and for all but is a continuing and sensitive process.

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himself, walking slowly and deliberately around the school, shaking the dust off his feet as he went, 'spoke' of his authority. His calm powerful presence made him unquestionably the Master. I did not hear anyone undermine his authority.

#### **4.9 'The impossibility of the task'; The First few days in Lamin Primary School**

I was an independent researcher on my own, accountable to nobody and I had four months to spend in one school with an open ended research question. Theoretically I knew what was expected but transferring this knowledge from the relatively fixed and safe confines of Nottingham University to a dusty and hot primary school in The Gambia was a daunting task. I felt lonely and overwhelmed by the enormity of the task I had undertaken. I felt it was easy 'to admit to the impossibility of the task' (Rhedding-Jones 1996;35). I couldn't even pretend that I could make phone calls and faxes to my supervisor because I knew that would be difficult to organise and prohibitively expensive. I was also painfully aware that this was the one chance I had of collecting data for my Ph.D. I longed for the parameters of safety which would guide, encourage and tell me what to do.

The day that I arrived in the school, which I call Lamin School, was an in-service day for the teachers which was being held in a classroom. Master came out of the classroom and walked to greet me in the school compound. The teachers



saw Master greeting me and I feel that in that moment the research was made. I knew that if Master was seen as publicly giving me approval then some of the teachers would probably do so also. They were certainly more likely to trust me and talk with me in the interview process. The warm and generous public greeting which Master gave me to his school was more effective in this cultural context than being introduced as 'the researcher from England' in a staff meeting. I handed Master a bag of kola nuts, a traditional sign of respect for older people, for which he was most grateful. Delamont (1992;127) describes such situations as 'critical incidents' in the fieldwork which are characterised by 'genuine feelings'. My great relief after coming all the way to The Gambia and meeting Master again was certainly genuine and I feel he was probably equally pleased to see me<sup>26</sup>.

#### **4.10 Documentary Data Collection**

For the first few days of the research I sat in Master's office and I collected as much documentary evidence as I could (see Table 4.1, stage one). In addition Master's office was the central focus of the staff administration and teachers came and went if they had queries. Hence it was a useful place in which to begin

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<sup>26</sup> I remember feeling quite euphoric that I had such a welcoming reception from Master. At the time I recalled that Ball had experienced a similar invitation when researching *Beachside Comprehensive* ( Ball, S.J. in Burgess R.G. 1984:76). *Beachside Comprehensive's* headteacher remarked 'I think we need to be studied' and Ball felt the headteacher to be 'welcoming and co-operative'. This empathy with Ball made me feel most confident about the possibilities for the research.

**Table 4.1: Flow chart of ethnographic data collection and data analysis in Lamin Primary School (November 1996-February 1997).**

<p><b>Stage One: Data Collection in Master's Office (Week 1)</b></p> <p>Building up rapport and documentary data collection. I engaged in informal chats with Master about educational issues. I made notes on these discussions in my field note books.</p> <p>I noted down general observations of teachers, discussions and 'rhythm of the day' in Master's office, including my feelings about the situation.</p>	<p><b>Stage Two: Data analysis (Week 1)</b></p> <p>'Writing up' and reflecting upon fieldnotes each evening. Reading documentary evidence and reflecting upon questions arising.</p> <p>Beginning to identify and sort educational issues which concern Master. Progressive focusing upon themes.</p>	<p><b>Stage Three: Data collection with teachers under the mango tree (Weeks 2,3)</b></p> <p>General observation and unstructured chatting and listening.</p> <p>Purpose: Building up rapport with teachers and identifying themes which are of concern to teachers.</p>
<p><b>Stage Four: Data analysis (Weeks 2,3)</b></p> <p>'Writing up' and reflecting upon fieldnotes taken 'under the mango tree' each evening.</p> <p>Triangulating these notes with Gambia College data and documentary data.</p> <p>Progressive focusing upon the following emergent analytic categories: recent political changes; national development; salary; double shift teaching and Islam.</p>	<p><b>Stage Five: Tape recorded semi-structured interviews with 28 teachers(Weeks 4-16).</b></p> <p>Context: In classrooms; Resource centre; under the mango tree with individual teachers.</p> <p>Interviews focusing upon analytic categories developed in <b>stages two and four</b>.</p>	<p><b>Stage Six: Data Analysis (Weeks 4-16).</b></p> <p>Context: Gambia College Computer Centre.</p> <p>I transcribed and printed the tape recordings each evening.</p> <p>I read transcript many times and identified analytic categories and concepts which I colour coded.</p> <p>Writing further probe questions to raise with teacher.</p>
<p><b>Stage Seven: Passed transcript of first interview to teacher for 'respondent validation' (Weeks 4-16)</b></p> <p>Context; Classrooms; resources centre; under mango tree.</p> <p>Asked teacher for clarification of issues in first interview leading to a tape recorded second interview.</p>	<p><b>Stage Eight: Data analysis (Weeks 4-16)</b></p> <p>Context: Gambia College Computer Centre.</p> <p>I transcribed and printed the tape recordings each evening.</p> <p>I read transcript many times and identified analytic categories and concepts which I colour coded.</p> <p><b>Respondent validation</b> of second interview. Occasionally writing further probe questions to raise with teacher in <b>third interview</b>.</p>	<p><b>Documentary data collection and analysis in Banjul. (Weeks 1-16).</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Macro socio-economic and demographic documentary data collection from Social Dimensions of Adjustment project.</li> <li>2. Educational statistics and policy documents from Ministry of Education.</li> <li>3. Educational newspaper and magazine articles.</li> <li>4. Teachers' Code of Conduct, Salary Scales, Terms and Conditions from the Gambia Teachers' Union.</li> </ol> <p><b>Semi-structured interview collection and analysis in Banjul (Weeks 1-16).</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• President of Gambia Teachers' Union Chief Education Officer</li> <li>• Regional Education Officer.</li> <li>• Head of Education Planning Unit</li> </ul>

my observations of the school. I told Master that I was a researcher and that I was interested in Gambian teachers and their understanding of professionalism. At this stage of the research I was unable to be more specific. I told him that if it was possible and he approved that I hoped to collect documentary data and interview some of the teachers in his school. I told him that that the research was to be anonymous and for my PhD<sup>27</sup>. Thus as at The Gambia College I was overt concerning the research with the people I was researching (Hammersley and Atkinson 1987).

At this early stage of the data collection I was interested in all educational documentary evidence which may effect teachers. I had not yet identified and developed research categories within the broad outline of teachers' lives (Hammersley and Atkinson 1987). As with The Gambia College there was a dearth of written material concerned with educational policy and practice. Master showed me all the paper work in his office (which he allowed me to see) and this amounted to very little but was nevertheless useful. On the walls of Master's office there were lists of teachers' names and the classes they taught beside them. A second list showed the teachers who were responsible for school clubs and the days they were held and where. In addition Master showed me a copy of a hand-written sheet of paper which listed all the teachers' ages, their dates of qualification, their posts of responsibility and their salary scales. I asked if it was possible to take the sheet into town to be photocopied (there was no electricity let

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<sup>27</sup> See Chapter Two for a discussion concerning the respondents misunderstanding of my role as a researcher.

alone a photocopier in the school) but Master refused on the grounds that the sheet was too valuable and too confidential to be removed from the school. I therefore copied down the list by hand<sup>28</sup>. These teachers' records were valuable since they gave me an overall perspective of Lamin's teachers.

Master informed me of the various educational innovations and changes taking place in the school. He told me that the introduction of the double shift the previous year into the Grade Ones and Twos was a major staffing change. He showed me a letter from the Regional Educational Officer informing him to introduce the double shift pattern of teaching (see Appendix Four). He let me copy this letter in town. There was however no other paper work concerned with this major staffing change in Master's office. Even at The Ministry of Education there were only few paragraphs in the Annual Education Statistics book dedicated to this topic.

Outside of Lamin primary school I collected newspaper and magazine articles concerned Gambian teachers. I visited the Ministry of Education to collect any printed material concerned with teachers; their pay and conditions; their rights as Civil Servants; the Code of Conduct and statistics on teachers. In addition I continued to collect Gambian socio-economic material which helped to place Gambian teachers' lives into a context.

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<sup>28</sup> The fact that Master showed me this list and let me copy it down is reflective of the trust he had in me. This trust had been built up when visiting his school many times to observe student teachers on teaching practice whilst I was a teacher trainer at The Gambia College.

#### **4.11 Observational data collection and Informal 'Chats' in Master's office**

For the next week I arrived at the school at about 9.00 and after the assembly I sat on the bench in Master's office and acted as a participant observer. I stayed in Master's office until after lunch which was about 2.30 pm. After this time it was too hot to work for me. (Master stayed until 6.00pm) As in the Gambia College ethnographic data collection I was involved in a process of 'general scanning' and 'unfocused watching' (Delamont 1992;112). In my notebook diary I noted all the comings and goings of teachers, parents and children. The teachers addressed him as Master and were not invited to sit down. Many of the conversations were in the local language of Mandinka but also sometimes Wolof. Master would leave his office in the early afternoon to pray outside. Thereafter (around 2.00pm) a taxi would arrive with Master's lunch from his home. I was invited to share Master's lunch bowl with him and we ate together on his desk.

Master introduced me to some of the different members of staff who came into his office. I was introduced as a former Gambia College lecturer. He did not tell them that I was a researcher<sup>29</sup>. Thus as a participant observer I got to meet the staff which was the beginning of a rapport (Hammersley and Atkinson 1987;141).

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<sup>29</sup> This may have been because there was very little social research done in Gambian primary schools and being introduced as a researcher may not have clarified my role at all.

#### ***4.12 Observational data and 'informal chats' with teachers under the mango tree***

In the following week as I became more confident and familiar with the school and the staff I began to sit in the sandy playground under a large shady mango tree about one hundred yards from Master's office (see Table 4.1 Stage Three). I had noticed that several teachers sat here during the day and I greeted them each morning on my way into Master's office and I now wished to develop a rapport with these teachers. The two teachers, Mr. Bah and Mr. Camarra, who sat here were called Senior teachers and their job was to offer advice to classroom teachers. I greeted them and offered them copies of the daily papers which I had bought in town. I explained that I was doing research for a University in England (see Chapter Two for a discussion concerning this issue). They appreciated these presents and we began to chat about teaching in an unfocused manner. At break time Mr. Bah and Mr. Camarra introduced me to the dozen or so male and female Grade one, two and three teachers who came and sat here. I was pleased to see that I knew two of the teachers as student teachers at the Gambia College. The main purpose of these informal chats under the mango tree was to build up a rapport with the teachers and to begin to identify themes which were of concern to the teachers.

As an outsider I played the role of being an 'acceptable incompetent', a novice. As an 'acceptable incompetent' (Hammersley and Atkinson 1987) it was possible for me to ask obvious questions and not to assume anything. I found that empathising with the teachers about the practical problems of large classes and the fatigue of standing up all day helped to build rapport. I told some of the teachers vignettes from when I was a teacher about some of the ill-behaved children in London's schools and the difficult job I had in controlling them. Lewin (in Vulliamy 1990) adopted a similar approach with teachers in Sri Lanka.

'By developing interviews as conversations with a teacher on the basis of some shared experience of problems, it was possible with many informants to develop a rapport that overcame initial suspicions' (Lewin in Vulliamy 1990;131).

Occasionally I bought these teachers watermelons and peanuts which we shared together at break times. Sometimes the teachers laughed at me because I was furiously attempting to scribble down everything they told me. Some of the teachers wanted me to watch them teaching in class. I did so and was most complimentary of them. Sometimes during these informal chats the teachers wanted me to make personal 'self-disclosures', particularly around the issue of my belief in God. (Hammersley and Atkinson 1987;92). In order not to offend the teachers I said that I believed in God and had been brought up a Christian (this was much more acceptable to the teachers than being an atheist).

The informal 'chats' under the mango tree and in their classrooms were valuable in helping me to understand the issues and problems with which the teachers were centrally concerned in their professional work and in the wider society. Each evening at home I read and re-read my fieldnotes several times. I often then proceeded to the Gambia College to type up my field notes on computer, print them out and further read and analyse my field notes. I analysed my field notes by looking for common themes and patterns. Thus the themes which I generated were grounded in the data. I triangulated these notes with the themes which had emerged from The Gambia College questionnaire data.

An issue which was of current interest to the teachers was the fast changing political situation in The Gambia. At the time the Presidential elections were taking place and this was a major topic of conversation amongst the teachers. This theme was frequently mentioned in conjunction with national development and the central importance of teachers. Issues around the double shift system of teaching were frequently discussed by the teachers. They often talked about their pay. The recently introduced world bank inspired 'text book loan scheme' was commonly mentioned.

The themes which emerged from my 'informal chats' and observations formed the basis in the next data collection phase which was the semi-structured interviews. I arranged interview times and places with several of the teachers with whom I had 'informal chats' with saying that I wished to find out more about their opinions



as teachers. The problems associated with the interviewing process is described in the following sections.

#### ***4.13 The Interviewing Processes; The Use of Opportunistic Interviews and 'Snowballing'***

Although I had interview times and dates arranged with some of the teachers, I found that these were sometimes broken. Gambian culture is affirmative and some Gambians will positively inform you of their intentions, which at the time are well meant, but which doesn't occur at the scheduled time. Concerning interviewing Gambian teachers Sarr and Lewin (1991) notes 'many were unable or unwilling to grant interviews'. Some of the teachers were too busy to be interviewed or too tired between lessons and at lunch. Some were probably apprehensive and unsure of what I would do with the tape recording and may not have trusted me. Some teachers, however, were eager for me to interview them. With one teacher I found myself in a similar situation to Paechter (1996).

'Several teachers used the interviews with me as an opportunity to let off steam about their situation, to talk through things that were bothering them, or simply to tell someone how they felt' (Paechter 1996;9).

I found that some of the male teachers were easier to interview than some of the female teachers. This may well have been cultural whereby some of the female teachers might have felt uncomfortable sitting with a foreign man. With other

female teachers this was not a problem.

The plan was to find a *diversity* of teachers, across the teaching age range, who were male and female, old and young, qualified and unqualified (See Chapter Eight). However this didn't work out as systematically as I had planned. I found that my interviewing was invariably *opportunistic*. I seized the chances of the setting and the respondent when the opportunity arose (Delamont 1992). If the teacher was willing and had the time I would interview him or her, usually where they sat.

I found the technique of 'snowballing' to be effective in encouraging teachers to be respondents (Delamont 1992). Snowballing is where one teacher would introduce me to their friend. Snowballing engendered confidence amongst the teacher who was to be interviewed since their colleague who I had interviewed often encouraged them.

#### ***4.14 Difficulties in finding a place to interview the teachers***

Sarr and Lewin (1991) note that interviewing difficulties with Gambian teachers 'centred on appropriate places in which to hold them'. There was no staffroom available and it was not always possible to use the resources room since the key was sometimes not available. This problem of finding an 'appropriate place' to conduct the interviews was exacerbated by the 'opportunistic' nature of many

interviews. Sometimes I would walk around the school trying to locate one of teachers I wished to interview. If I found a particular teacher I wished to interview sitting on the porch outside their classrooms I would greet and chat with them and then ask if I could interview them. Sometimes this was not possible but at other times it was. The teachers sometimes sat outside their classes when the *oustas*, Islamic teacher, was teaching their class and the teacher thus had a free period.

Some of the interviews were conducted in the wind and dust outside the classroom, whilst other teachers invited me into their classroom to conduct the interview. One of the teachers whom I interviewed outside her classroom locked the classroom door so that we would not be disturbed by the children who were inside! Another teacher who I interviewed outside her classroom simply called through the open window to tell her children to keep quiet whilst she was being interviewed! When a teacher invited me into the classroom to do the interview it was often noisy. One teacher sat behind her desk whilst I interviewed her and if the children became too noisy she called out to be quiet! Other teachers I interviewed under the mango tree where it could become very hot in the afternoon. During Ramadam, the lunar month of Islamic fasting, the teachers did not eat or drink at school. Even though it was January, afternoon temperatures were in the 90's, and understandably the teachers were reluctant to be interviewed. Hence during January I respected the teachers' fatigue and informally 'chatted' with them noting down anything of interest.

#### **4.15 *The semi-structured interviews* (see Table 4.1, Stage Five).**

In addition to noting down the context, the teacher's name, the time and my feelings about the interview, I used a micro-cassette tape recorder for the semi-structured interviews. The micro-cassette recorder is small and therefore unobtrusive. Gambian English is spoken quickly and I found it impossible to note down more than just the highlights of the interview. I felt that it was important to transcribe and analyse the complete interview with the teachers. Since I was an outsider it was difficult for me to 'read' nuances and subtleties in speech. Hence using a tape recorder was most useful. At the beginning of the interview I showed the tape recorder to the teacher and asked them if I could tape the interview. I explained how they could turn the tape recorder off at anytime if they wanted to. I told the teachers that I would give them copies of their interviews and if they were unhappy with any of it I would appropriately amend the transcript. The interviews lasted about half an hour to an hour.

From my analysis of observations, documents and informal chats under the mango tree (see below and Table 4.1, Stages two and four) and on-going reflection upon the student teachers' data at Gambia College I was able to 'progressively focus' (Hammersley and Atkinson 1987) upon the themes which concerned teachers. These themes formed the basis of the questions in the semi-structured interviews as follows;

- Why did you become a teacher?
- How do you feel as teacher?
- How do you feel as a female teacher?

- Is your job professional?
- What does the community feel about teachers?
- What do you think about the salary?
- How do you think the recent political changes are effecting your job?

Within these broad questions I would continually use probe questions such as 'what do you mean by that?'; 'can you explain to me'; 'why did you say that?'. Playing the role of 'acceptable incompetent' (Hammersley and Atkinson 1987) meant that I could ask these sometimes 'obvious' probing questions. The teachers often gave further elaboration and clarification of issues because of these probe questions.

After analysing the teacher's transcript (see below) I sometimes needed to ask the teacher for further clarification of an issue. This may have been because I could not hear what the teacher said on the tape recorder because of background noise or because conceptually I did not understand a point. This process of asking teachers for further clarification often led to a second and sometimes third interview with the teacher (Table 4.1; Stage Seven).

#### ***4.16 Data analysis***

During the first month of the fieldwork, I collected a voluminous amount of unstructured observational data based upon informal chats and 'hanging around' the school each day (see Table 4.1, Stages One to Four). This data was noted

down in five field notebooks. Each evening, if I did not feel too tired, I read through my notes and transferred them onto computer in the Gambia College Computing Centre (when the electricity worked). This editing process of the fieldnotes helped with identification of common patterns and themes which frequently emerged. As I read and re-read my notes and daily added to them I progressively focused the broad themes into refined analytic sub-categories. (This process of gradual refinement of data categories was on-going through out the fieldwork and 'writing-up' stage.) To begin with I identified the following broad categories. Nationalism and the recent political changes and Islam were issues which commonly arose in informal 'chats' with the teachers. Critically these themes were of significance in the Gambia College questionnaire data. Hence each day involved a process of both data collection and analysis. There was no clear period when I was simply involved in either collection or analysis. Rather during this first month both occurred together as a process.

From week four to the end of the fieldwork I began to collect and analyse tape recordings of semi-structured interviews with teachers (see Table 4.1, Stages Five to Eight). At home in the evenings I played the tape recording over several times listening carefully to what the teacher was saying. Listening to some of the tapes was problematic because of the background classroom noises. As I listened to the tape recording I noted down the salient themes and categories that emerged from the interview. Listening to the tape several times was thus an initial process in the data analysis. In the evening I took the tape to the Gambia

College Computer Centre (I was lent a key) where I transcribed the full length of each interview. Although time consuming I felt it necessary to transcribe the whole interview so as not to lose subtleties, contradictions and unusual interpretations in the teacher's account. I printed out two copies of the transcripts, one for myself and one for the teacher to read to validate the interview (see below and Table 4.1, Stage Seven).

Back at home I avidly read and re-read the transcripts, sometimes by candle light at night. I attempted to identify similar analytic categories emerging from amongst the teachers' accounts. With coloured felt-tip pens I colour coded the side of paragraphs according to the category they focused upon; green for politics; red for gender issues; black for Islamic issues; I wrote a capital 'DS' next to double shift issues; yellow for pay; blue for motivation in becoming a teacher and orange for promotional issues. On the computer at College I 'cut and pasted' these analytic categories together so I got a second set of categorised data in addition to the original transcripts. I attempted to locate differences between the teachers concerning the above analytic categories so as to reflect the diversity of interpretations amongst Lamin primary school staff.

Alongside the transcript I would write questions where I did not understand an issue. Like Lewin:

'I listened long and hard to informants' interpretations that I did not at first grasp' (Lewin in Vulliamy 1990;141).

Thus a second interview was often necessary to clarify issues raised in the first interview. I gave the teacher their copy of the interview with question marks on it where I did not understand an issue. If the teacher had time I asked them to read through their transcript noting any issues they felt had been misrepresented. Many teachers wanted to further explain themselves on the issues where I had placed a question mark. This process sometimes led to a second semi-structured tape recorded interview with the teacher (see Table 4.1, Stage Seven). By passing the teachers a copy of their transcripts I engaged in the triangulation technique of respondent validation. Respondent validation means checking with the participants to see if they recognise the validity of the analysis being developed (Delamont 1992). Giving a copy of the transcript to the teachers fulfilled the ethical principal of local 'input and ownership' (Hammersley 1992).

The second interview was similarly listened to several times, transcribed on computer, printed out twice and colour coded according to its themes or analytic categories. A second copy of the interview was printed for the teacher to read and validate. Hence further respondent validation took place which in two cases led to a third tape recorded interview and subsequent transcription and thematic analysis. When I returned to England I theoretically interrogated the data I had collected theme by theme (see Chapters Ten and Eleven).



#### 4.17 Triangulation

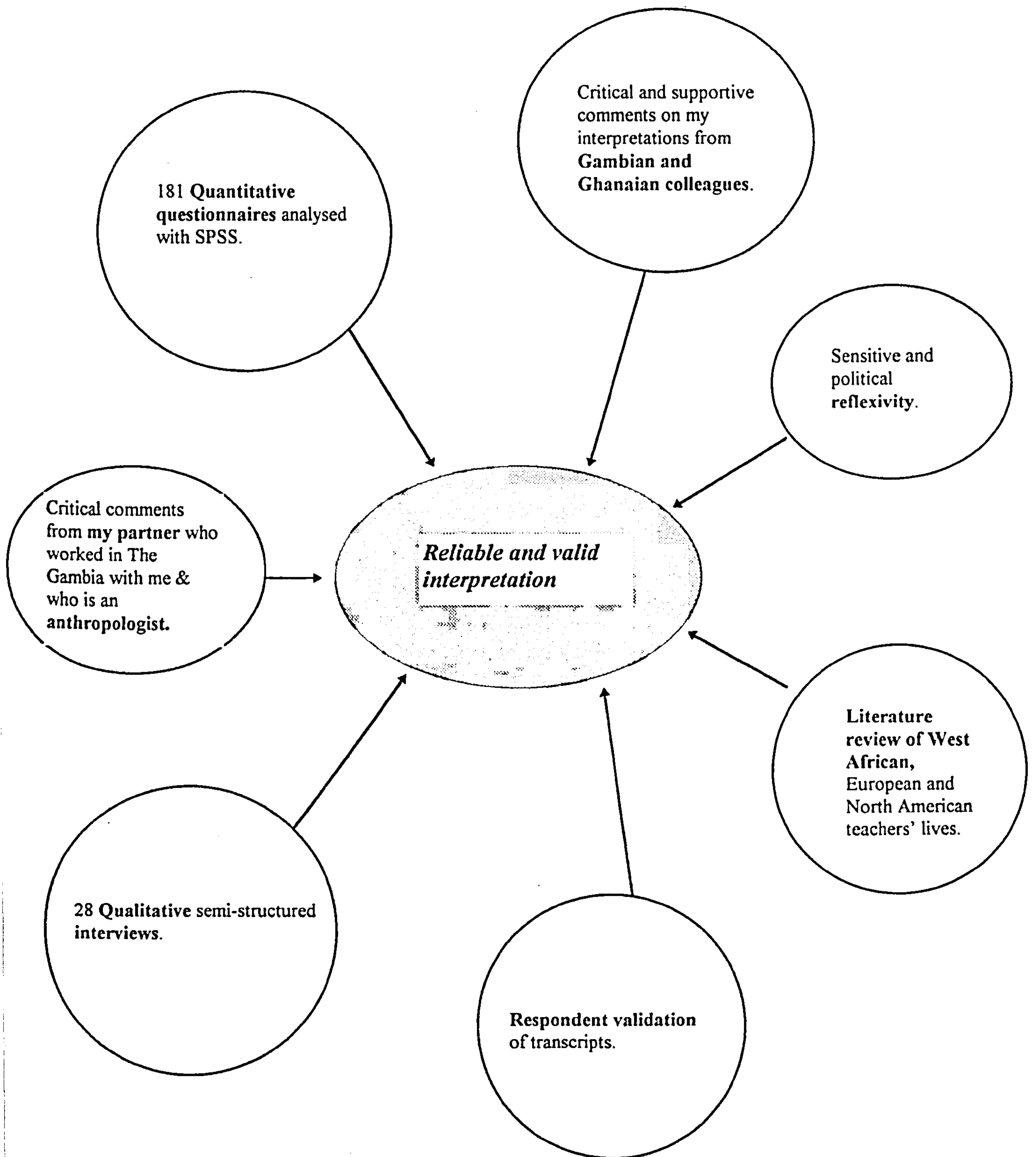
Triangulation means having two or more 'fixes' or 'sightings' of a finding from different angles (Delamont 1992). In the above section I discussed how the interview data was triangulated by the respondents themselves reading a transcript of their interview, which sometimes led to further discussion. In addition the research's reliability and validity came from the following methods (see Table 4.2); a literature review of West African, European and North American teachers' lives and careers; obtaining two data sets (the questionnaires and the semi-structured interviews); critical comments of West African friends and colleagues and my wife who is an anthropologist and finally :the reflexive nature of the data collection. I now examine each of these in turn.

The quantitative data produced by the questionnaires supported the qualitative data produced by the semi-structured interviews. Although producing *different types of data*<sup>30</sup>, critically the crude analytic categories of the questionnaires (nationalism, salary, motivations to teach) were used to organise the semi-structured interviews. Thus the questionnaire data and the interview data produced *different* data in similar analytic categories. The questionnaires

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<sup>30</sup> The questionnaire data was aimed at testing crude categories of data (with percentage points) which could be analysed with SPSS. These included percentage differences between male and female teachers on a range of issues including nationalism and satisfaction with teaching. The questionnaire was not aimed at understanding *why* the student teachers were satisfied or unsatisfied with teaching or how they *felt* about their profession. The semi-structured interviews which were developed out of the questionnaire data aimed at understanding the *processes*

**Table 4.2 Triangulation of data leading to a reliable and valid interpretation**



provided an additional data set which added generalisability and validity to crucial aspects of the qualitative research such as teacher's commitment to national development. The questionnaires enabled me to broaden the scope of the research to include a large sample size of student teachers. Like Lewin (1990) my questionnaires

'permitted some generalisations to emerge with more confidence than would otherwise be possible' (Lewin in Vulliamy 1990;162).

The confidence in my findings has indeed been added to as a result of using both quantitative and qualitative methods.

Having more than one investigator to discuss my interpretations and analysis added further validity to my work (Delamont 1992). I asked a Gambian friend who has now become British through marriage to a VSO colleague, for his comments on the data I collected. His unique British/Gambian insight has proved most valuable concerning my interpretations of Gambian teachers. He stated that the teachers had been honest with me and that my interpretations were a true reflection of how the teachers felt. Similarly Leach (1991) who carried out ethnography in Sudan, obtained invaluable assistance from long-term expatriate friends who were married to Sudanese nationals. Furthermore a British/Ghanaian colleague who works for VSO has used some of the data in this

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through which teachers interpreted teaching.

thesis to prepare training manuals and resources for development courses.

Additionally, I cross-checked my interpretations with my wife who is an anthropologist and who taught Gender Studies at The Gambia College. With her knowledge and different perspectives as a woman I interrogated my interpretations and assumptions. During the writing of this PhD she has been a constant constructive critic of my developing ideas.

During the research I was critically reflective throughout and made all the research methods, processes and relationships explicit. According to Delamont such reflexivity makes the research valid and reliable.

'As long as qualitative researchers are reflexive, making all their processes explicit, then issues of reliability and validity are served' (Delamont 1992).

Reflexivity is the on-going reflective self-conscious process of examining relationships between the researcher and the informants. Reflexive research celebrates 'the endless cycle of interactions and perceptions' with the informants (Delamont 1992). This research has indeed celebrated the research relationships and these are discussed in the following sections.

During the research I filled five notebooks, much of which concern my relationships with Gambian colleagues and teachers. Some of my notes concern the importance of appearance in Gambian schools where dress can be quite

conservative. Delamont (1992) notes that appearance is a crucial issue when carrying out research. In the following section I discuss the importance of my 'impression management' (Hammersley and Atkinson 1987) regarding my clothes.

#### **4.18 Research relationships; 'Impression Management' (Hammersley and Atkinson 1987).**

Relative to average earnings Gambians tend to spend a large amount of money on clothing (Social Dimensions of Structural Adjustment 1995). Hence it was most important that I dressed smartly, particularly on Muslim prayer days, if I was to be taken seriously as a researcher. Concerning appearance Mirza states,

'Presentation of self is crucial in research and affects both the process of negotiation to obtain potential respondents and the actual interview process itself' (Mirza 1995;170).

I bought the tie and dye teacher's uniform of shirt and trousers. By wearing the teacher's uniform each day I hoped that it would be taken as a sign of my wanting to empathise and understand their problems as teachers. Moreover the teacher's uniform was an incredible kaleidoscope of colours and was cut to a traditional design of open flowing shirt and baggy trousers and hence was remarkably cool to wear in the heat. The teachers remarked upon how good I looked in *their*

uniform, affirming that I was acceptable to them.

#### **4.19 The complexities of power in the research relationship**

I was *invited* into the Headteacher's office, who was known simply as Master, on terms largely dictated by him. Fortunately, because of our previous relationship the Master actively welcomed me into his school and facilitated the research with 'his' teachers. Without the Master's kind and generous assistance the research project would not even have got started. The Master decided when to talk with me, where I was to sit, when I could use the tape-recorder and whether and how to answer my questions. The Master was my 'senior' and in many ways I felt him to be more powerful than me. In addition I didn't *feel* physically powerful because my health was poor in The Gambia. I contracted malaria and was easily weakened by the heat and dust.

In my research relationships power was far from unidirectional. Thus for Walkerdine<sup>31</sup> the researcher and the researched:

'...are not unitary subjects uniquely positioned, but are produced as a nexus of subjectivities, in relations of power

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<sup>31</sup> Walkerdine's understanding of power within the research relationship is firmly placed within Foucault's arguments.

'Power is not something that is acquired, seized or shared, something that one holds on to or allows to slip away; power is exercised from innumerable points, in the interplay of nonegalitarian and mobile relations (Foucault, 1978;94).

Foucault states that power is not fixed and does not stay in one place but rather is contested and negotiated and is highly fluid and dynamic. Foucault questions the researcher's assumptions concerning power as residing with him/her self and the power in the research relationship as being unidirectional (Paechter 1993).

which are constantly shifting, rendering them at one moment powerful and at another powerless. (Walkerdine 1990;3).

The research relationship is complex and is based upon the historical, material and institutional positioning of the researcher and the researched. Power constantly ebbed and flowed between myself and the respondents depending upon *who* I was interviewing and the context. Thus with Master, the Regional Education Officers and the Education Ministers I felt relatively powerless and dependent upon them (Neal 1995). With the unqualified teachers I felt relatively powerful but I was nonetheless dependent upon their co-operation. Thus I felt more or less powerful depending upon whom I was interviewing.

Intimately connected with power is the complicated ethical issues of money, resourcing and 'pay-back' (Mirza 1995).

#### ***4.20 Research relationships and The Issue of Reciprocity and 'Pay-back'***

The case of reciprocity and 'pay-back' in The Gambia, a poor country, proved to be fraught with ethical dilemmas and contradictions (Mirza 1995). The issue of 'pay-back'<sup>32</sup> for researchers in developing countries is underwritten, partly perhaps because it is ethically highly problematic.

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<sup>32</sup> I consider my two years working for VSO in relation to the issue of 'pay-back' for this piece of research. As a VSO I trained several hundred primary teachers. In this small capacity I feel, as did some of the teachers in the case study school, that I gave of my time and energy towards developing The Gambian education service. Many of the teachers knew that I had been a lecturer at The Gambia College for two years and respected my work in this capacity. Indeed I had met many of the teachers in my capacity as a lecturer since the case study school was located in the same town as The Gambia College.

Culturally in The Gambia it is *expected* that a well-off person will generously give of their money. It is also a requirement of Islam to be generous. I noticed the Master gave small amounts of cash to some of the poorer refugee students who needed to travel to Cassamass, South Senegal. It is in this context that at the end of the research I gave *some* of the teachers who had given me a lot of their time and information, small amounts of cash.

Once during an interview with a qualified teacher a colleague came over to us and asked her friend some questions. Their discussion was in Mandinka. I asked the teacher what she had been saying to her friend. She told me that she would be leaving the school early because her daughter was in hospital. She proceeded to tell me that her daughter had fallen down the family well in their compound whilst drawing water and that she had to visit her daughter in hospital in the capital, Banjul. Upon hearing this story I immediately gave the teacher a D50 note (approximately five pounds) which is roughly equivalent to the daily salary of a qualified teacher. She did not, however, *ask* me for any money.

I interviewed the teachers during work hours so I knew that they were getting paid but I wished to somehow materially show my appreciation for their generosity of time and information. I was after all interviewing them during their break time and lunch time. Hence I bought the Master and the teachers small presents with which I hoped to say 'thank you'. I regularly brought the Master kola nuts which he enjoyed very much. At the end of the fieldwork I went to the capital, Banjul, and bought Master a large and beautiful clock to hang in his new office. I gave the teachers large water melons which we enjoyed together. I also brought peanuts and sandwiches and soft drinks and sweets for the teachers I interviewed. I also gave some of these teachers items of stationery and small



amounts of cash. I did say that I would do some teaching for the some of the teachers. Unfortunately I did not teach because I got sick with malaria towards the end of the research and partly because it is difficult to teach 50 children. In retrospect I should have been prepared to teach more than I did. This may have been an effective 'pay-back' to the teachers. I did however feel that my time in the school was limited and I needed every available opportunity for observation and interviewing.

### ***Conclusion***

In this chapter I have described how the research progressively focused from broad and unspecified issues to particular analytic categories. Initially I was interested in several broad themes within Gambian education which over the course of a year at The Gambia College I narrowed to a focus on student teachers. This focusing occurred largely for practical reasons because I became more familiar with what was possible and what was not in The Gambia. Concentrating upon the student teachers I developed research hypotheses which I subsequently tested using a large scale questionnaire. Analysis of this questionnaire in turn led to further questions which necessitated ethnographic fieldwork. Thus data analysis fed into subsequent data collection. As I collected ethnographic data in the school my research questions were gradually honed and refined. Analysis of the ethnographic research led to the generation of several analytic categories. Thus the analytic categories emerged from the data analysis.

In this manner the research involved 'grounded theorising' (Glaser and Strauss 1967) in which concepts and theory are developed out of data analysis and future data collection is guided by the emergent analytic categories and concepts.

The formulation and clarification of the research questions occurred during my two years at The Gambia College and three years studying for the PhD. Not until I was interrogating the ethnographic data with literature, in what was effectively my fourth year of research, did I *really* appreciate the central concern of the research, (why given the poor material conditions were some Gambian teachers so committed to their work?) Over the five years the research involved a constant interweaving of informal and formal data collection and data analysis. In The Gambia the data collection and data analysis were not discrete stages but rather occurred more or less at the same time. This was partly because of the practical constraints of doing ethnographic fieldwork in The Gambia. Sustaining both data collection and data analysis throughout the fieldwork proved difficult to achieve. Physically I found the data collection hard work and was sometimes too tired to listen to the tape recordings, transcribe them and colour code them at night. If I was unable to transcribe the tape recording that night or the next day I did listen to the tape several times noting down its main points and thus I carried out an informal data analysis.

In this chapter I have discussed how research relationships are complex and based upon the historical, material and institutional positioning of the researcher

and the researched. Power constantly ebbed and flowed between myself and the respondents depending upon *who* I was interviewing and the context. When in The Gambia I found myself vulnerable and dependent upon Gambian teachers to provide me with their time. Within the context of The Gambia, as a researcher working alone, I sometimes felt relatively powerless. Without my experience and contacts in The Gambia this cross-cultural research would not have been possible. In allowing me to conduct the research in his school Master displayed his trust in me since he did not know what I would do with the findings. In a similar situation in Malaysia Lewin notes:

'There was a real possibility that oversight or insensitivity in conducting the research and reporting it could have created problems for the school involved and for individual teachers - and, of course, for me' (Lewin in Vulliamy 1990;131).

Given the unstable political situation within The Gambia I was aware of the delicacy of some of the information which I collected and I assured Master of the anonymity and confidentiality of the research. However in a country as small as The Gambia it was difficult to retain anonymity. The social networks which operate upon kinship, age and professional lines make it relatively easy for someone to trace the school and hence the respondents. Master trusted me because I was known by him and his family over a period of several years. In-depth ethnographic fieldwork demands such trust between the researcher and researched.

## **Chapter Five**

### ***An Overview of The Gambian Education System; Historical and Contemporary Policies, Structures and Statistics***

#### ***Introduction***

This Chapter summarises the differing political conditions under which Gambian teachers' professionalism has been attempted. In so doing it examines the historical and contemporary policies, structures and statistics of the Gambian Education system. This chapter places The Gambia College and Lamin Primary School where I carried out the fieldwork, within the wider context of The Gambian Education system.

This Chapter is divided into four parts. In Part A, *An Overview of the Gambian Education System*, I discuss the arguments which state that *one* of the major reasons for the current crisis within developing countries education systems, such as The Gambia, is the historical context of colonialism (Ball 1984; White 1995) . It is argued that the colonial system repressed and restricted education in the colonies (Foster 1965). I examine the policies and ideologies which legitimated the suppression of education within the colonies. Some argue that a continuing process of neo-colonial underdevelopment<sup>33</sup> continues to hamper and prevent adequate educational development in developing countries such as The Gambia

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<sup>33</sup> *Under-development* is a predominately Marxist materialist term and refers to the exploitative economic relationship between the colonial countries' economies and the colonised countries' economies. Underdevelopment refers to the development of the colonial economies and at the same time the *under-development* of the colonised economies. The colonial economies development is *dependent* upon the extraction of raw materials, food production and pool of cheap labour from the colonised countries (Walter Rodney 1974).

(Graham-Brown 1991; Onimode 1988). The colonial Government of the Gambia unsuccessfully attempted to thwart Gambian educational aspirations (Peters 1967). Colonial administrations were aware of the potential education could have in furthering people's political ambitions and thus of disturbing the political status-quo.

In Part B I examine the evidence which suggests that despite the coming of Independence in 1965 under President Jawara, who was in power from 1965 to 1994, access to education and quality of education could have been much improved (Peters 1967). Some of the teachers I interviewed stated that educational progress and development under the Jawara regime had been disappointing and frustrating since Independence. Partly because of Jawara's ambivalence towards teachers some teachers *before* the Coup had wanted to leave the profession. Indeed some teachers blamed the Jawara Government for incompetence and corruption and even for deliberately 'underdeveloping' (Rodney 1973) rural educational opportunities in favour of urban education. Some argue, however, that the predominate reason for continued Gambian educational impoverishment is the international world capitalist system (Graham-Brown 1991).

In Part C, I examine the structures and ten year policies of the present Gambian education system. The case-study primary school, Lamin School, (see Chapters Five, Seven and Eight) was built during this period.

In Part D I examine the effects of the July 22<sup>nd</sup> 1994 Coup upon the education system. Some Gambian teachers, education officials, and international commentators argue that the political changes instigated by the July 22<sup>nd</sup> Coup

have ideologically and materially benefited the education system. I examine these claims in the light of recent education statistics. Some of the teachers describe the various ways in which they 'feel better' about the teaching profession now that there is a Government in power which they feel respects and values the work of teachers. Analysing Lamin School teachers' transcripts, I argue this increased respect from the Government and society for the teaching profession, combined with a commensurate increase in resources, engenders a process of teachers' professionalisation<sup>34</sup>. It is important to note that some teachers did not share this enthusiasm for their new Government and felt that 'nothing had changed'.

## **PART A**

### **5.1 *The colonial underdevelopment of The Gambian education system***

It is critical to understand the historical Gambian colonial education system- its ideologies, policies and structures. The Gambian colonial education system established the 'contextual parameters' within which Gambian teachers work today. The *historical* 'contextual parameters' help to locate *current* Gambian teachers' stories. Goodson states that:

'It would be unfortunate if, in studying teachers' stories, we ignored these contextual parameters which so substantially impinge upon and constantly restrict the teacher's life' (Goodson 1995;96).

Gambian teachers' stories are inextricably impinged upon by the historical and

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<sup>34</sup> I understand professionalisation to be concerned with the *status* of the teaching occupation in society (Hoyle 1980).

current crisis of The Gambian education system. Teachers' salaries, conditions of service, classroom pedagogy, careers and professional sense of self are made within this continuing historical crisis (Government of The Gambia 1996). In the next section I examine the large differences between high urban and low rural enrolments. This difference is a legacy of the colonial Gambian Government.

## ***5.2 The historical difference in educational provision between the urban colony and the rural protectorate***

The educational inequalities between *high urban* enrolments and *low rural* enrolments were established in the colonial period. Today there is still an acute disparity in educational provision and take-up between the capital urban area and the rural areas in The Gambia. One of the reasons for the educational disparities is that the colonial Government separated The Gambia into a Colony and a Protectorate. In effect the Colony was the urban area and the Protectorate was the rural area.

The rural areas of The Gambia were politically joined as an Islamic state. The Marabouts who controlled this Islamic state resisted colonial law and order by force.

'In 1894, after a fiercely contested military invasion, the British destroyed the Marabout Islamic state and annexed the kingdom to the British Colony of the Gambia' (Quinn 1972;70).

The rural area of The Gambia became annexed to the Colony as a Protectorate. The Protectorate was and is known as the Provinces. The Gambia Teacher Training College and Lamin School both lie within the Provinces. The former

Islamic state lay outside the geographical bounds of the Colony. The British Colony of The Gambia was deemed as the capital, Bathurst, and its immediate surrounding area. The administrative functions of the Colonial Government of The Gambia, the port, the military garrison, churches and schools were all to be found in the Colony.

During the colonial period although only 10% of the Gambian population lived in the Colony this is where most of the Western education was located. The enrolment rate in primary education was 83% in Bathurst (now Banjul) in 1938 (Community Education Report 1995). At Gambian Independence in 1965 there were less than 300 qualified primary school teachers in the whole country. Nearly all the qualified teachers were working in the Colony (The Republic of The Gambia 1967, Ministry of Education). These teachers worked in the twenty mainly Mission established primary schools in the Colony. Concerning secondary education at Independence there were just eighty nine qualified secondary school teachers in the country (The Republic of The Gambia 1967, Ministry of Education). These few secondary teachers worked in six secondary schools, five of which were located in the capital Bathurst. Of these six secondary schools only three provided an academic curriculum; Gambia High School, St. Augustine's Secondary School and St. Joseph's Secondary School. There were two secondary modern schools, Crab Island School and Latrikunda School which provided a vocational education.

In contrast to the high primary enrolment rates in the capital urban area, in the rural Protectorate at Independence in 1965 there was an almost total lack of any Western academic education. The primary enrolment rate was just 2% for the rural Gambian population (Sasnett & Sepmeyer 1966;376). There was only one



secondary School in the provinces, Armitage High School. Armitage High School at Georgetown was for the sons of Gambian chiefs, certainly not for the rural peasantry (Sasnett & Sepmeyer 1966;376).

Hence it can be seen that at Independence there was virtually no academic Western education for rural Gambians. Even in the urban Colony there was extremely limited provision particularly beyond primary school. Referring to this education crisis and legacy the Ministry of Education stated

‘At Independence in 1965, the Government of The Gambia inherited a very weak educational system’ (The Government of The Gambia 1996).

How did this Colonial education crisis arise? What educational understandings and ideologies did British colonialists and British missionaries have? In the next sections I attempt to answer these questions.

### ***5.3 The colonial administration’s educational policies (and lack of them) compared to successful missionary education provision***

Both the Colonial Government and the missionaries wanted to exercise control over the West African elite for political, commercial and religious reasons (Ball 1984). The missionaries wished to proselytise Gambians. One way in which the administration and the missionaries attempted to control the West African elite was through education (Ball 1984). Armitage High School in rural Georgetown was established by the colonial administration for the education and control of the sons of Gambian chiefs. In addition an educated indigenous elite were needed to run the colony (Ball 1984).

It is critical to note that the Colonial Government of The Gambia and the Methodist and Catholic Missionaries had *different* educational ideologies and educational policies. Generally the Colonial Administration was extremely reluctant to fund education whereas the Missions, particularly the Catholic and the Methodist Missions, enthusiastically supported the provision of education for Gambians. There are still Christian Missionary schools in The Gambia. In contrast to the Missions, the Colonial Government of The Gambia until 1945, made little financial commitment to Gambian education. The Missionaries successfully established Western education in the urban Colony to convert Gambians to Christianity. In the Nineteenth century the Missionaries developed primary and secondary schools in Bathurst which are still successfully operating.

The Colonial Administration's *reluctance* to fund education drew authority from the 1847 Education Committee of the Privy Council to the Colonial Office. This committee suggested that 'provision of education for the colonies should be self-financing' (Ball 1984;123). Committee's such as this legitimated the Colonial Office's ideologies of *laissez-faire* educational policies in the Colonies. Thus the missions, who actively wanted to provide Christian education in the Colonies were allowed by the Colonial Administration to be the main providers of education (White 1995).

'Britain's *laissez-faire* attitude towards education in the colonies relieved it of the responsibility of educational administration and policy formation' (White 1995;13).

Crucially White omits that Britain's economic *laissez-faire* policies towards Gambian education also relieved it of any financial commitments. The colonial

government of The Gambia abrogated its responsibility for educational funding, administration and policy<sup>35</sup>. Given the history of no financial contribution, let alone policies, for the Colony's education it can be seen that the colonial government of the Gambia was not interested in education for Gambians. If it were not for the Methodist and Catholic Missionaries in The Gambian Colony there would have been very little formal Western education in the Colony. The nineteenth century Methodist and Catholic Missionaries established primary schools and two secondary schools in Bathurst, the Colony's capital.

Ball (1984) argues that that this *laissez-faire* policy of leaving education to the missionaries was more than just mere indifference. In nineteenth century Britain it was argued that education was necessary for the social control of the masses and the maintenance of the political status quo. It is interesting that no such arguments were put forward for the education of the masses in The Gambia and other colonies.

'As far as the education of the colonial masses is concerned, the strategies employed by the colonial administrations cast education in the role of disrupter of political stability rather than as a means of achieving political hegemony. The schooling of the masses must be seen in terms of *policies of exclusion from schooling altogether* or at least exclusion from the literary/academic curriculum' (Ball 1984;130 *my emphasis*).

Education of the colonised in The Gambia, as in other British colonies, was seen as potentially threatening to the established political order. Presumably the colonial authorities were fearful that if the Gambian peasantry learnt how to read

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<sup>35</sup> This is possibly more the case in former British Gambia than in other British West African colonies because The Gambia was economically insignificant to the British.

and write in English they would begin to demand basic human rights such as the right to self-determination in English through the colonial courts. It was not until 1945 that the colonial government of the Gambia took over education in the Colony from the Missions (Sasnett & Sepmeyer 1966).

#### ***5.4 Colonial provision of academic education for the African elite and non-academic education for the majority population***

The Colonial Government of The Gambia drew legitimisation for their reluctance to provide education from the 1925 Advisory Committee on Education In the Colonies. Their education policy was drawn from a document entitled '*Memorandum on Education Policy in British Tropical Africa*'. This 1925 Report recommended the differentiation of education between the African elite who should have an education and the majority of Africans who should not have one. Ball (1984) argues that it is only with the African elite that 'education as social control' thesis can be applied, presumably because the elite were the only Africans allowed an education. The colonial authorities in the Gambia were aware of the potential political problems that education might bring to the maintenance of the political status-quo. In other words educated Gambians were perceived as a threat to colonialism. Thus education and particularly secondary education was kept to an absolute minimum.

Ball (1984) argues that the colonial school's primary function was 'directly linked to the needs of the economy'. Due to the small size and nature of the Gambian economy, based upon the export of groundnuts, there was little, if any need, for an educated labour force in the rural areas. The capital, Bathurst, required educated Gambians to help administer the country. Bathurst was the centre of

the Gambian colonial economy and hence it was here that education of Gambians was needed.

Underpinning the reluctance of the Colonial Government to provide education were racist and classist ideologies.

'In the 1920's and 1930's it was suggested by the colonial authorities that the Africans lacked the intellectual ability to benefit in any real way from European subject matter' (Ball 1984;137).

Such racism was a convenient excuse for not providing the necessary finance for an education system in The Gambia. A similar racist ideology was to be found in a Colonial Office 1953 document. The 1953 document reworked the 1925 recommendations. Education for Africans it was stated:

'should inspire a deep and abiding affection for rural life and the things of the countryside' (Colonial Office 53;70 in White 96).

Western academically educated Gambians challenged the racist philosophy underpinning colonialism. Hence the Colonial Office's recommendations that Gambians should study agriculture and not academic subjects.

The Gambian education system was never politically nor financially encouraged by the Colonial Government of The Gambia. It is important to recognise that Gambians were not merely victims of the colonial administration's educational policies (Ball 1984). The Gambian elite struggled for the Human Right for an academic education against the prevailing racist ideologies and had some small

measure of success in the capital. The Gambian middle class were particularly active in making educational demands of the colonial administration.

'There was pressure exerted on the missions and the colonial governments to increase the provision of schools; to provide secondary and further education opportunities for the African pupil' (Ball 1984;138).

On the other hand Muslim Gambians were actively against Western Christian education which they perceived as a threat to Islamic teaching. In the next section I examine Gambian responses to education during the colonial period.

### ***5.5 Gambian responses to colonial education policies and missionary education***

In addition to militarily resisting British imperialism some of the Muslim Gambian population, especially in rural areas, resisted Christian Missionary education.

'Historically, western schools have been met with massive resistance by the rural population in The Gambia' (Ministry of Finance & Economic Affairs 1995).

Methodist and Catholic Missionary schools were the first Western schools in The Gambia. These Missionary schools were seen by Muslim Gambians as potentially dangerous places where children might lose their Islamic religion, their morals and their culture. This is still the case in the more remote parts of The Gambia (Community Survey Report 1995). During a field trip in 1995 with the Vice-Principal of The Gambia College I went to a remote community in which there was no formal western education because the community preferred Islamic

education.

However, like all populations, the Gambian population is heterogeneous. There were many Gambians, especially in the Colony, who wanted an academic Western education and were denied it. The Gambian elite *demand*ed an academic Western primary and secondary education. The educated Gambians who were the product of these academic schools helped pave the way for Gambian Independence in 1965. Hence the colonial authorities were right to associate education with political unrest.

'The limitations placed upon access to the highest positions within the European-dominated occupational structure fostered early Nationalist movements which were led and organised by the urbanised, Western-educated elements. So far as the political consequences of Western education are concerned, 'Colonisation not only created the social conditions of its demise; it provided also the ideological weapons' (Foster 1965;105).

Colonialism required a literate and educated labour force to run the civil service. Thus colonialism had within itself the seeds of its own demise. One of the reasons that Gambians obtained Independence and the positions of power they desired was largely because of the Gambian elite's political power gained through Western education. In addition the Gambian elite soon recognised the social and economic benefits to be obtained from a Western education. These benefits lay outside the traditional social system.

'Western education, in practice, constituted an alternative path to social mobility outside the traditional structure...and to maximise their children's opportunities within the emergent occupational and prestige structures created by colonialism' (Foster 1965;105/6).

The Gambian elite secured some educational human rights for themselves. However the Colonial Government's lack of commitment to education effectively excluded the Gambian masses from Western education. The historical knowledge presented in this section is important since it increases awareness of the crisis of education in The Gambia which the Gambian Government inherited at Independence in 1965.

In the next section I examine the on-going arguments concerning educational provision in The Gambia post-Independence 1965. Some Gambian teachers and others argue that although *some* progress in educational provision was observed under President Jawara, 1965-1994, *substantially* more could have been achieved. Some Gambian teachers and educationalists argue that since Jammeh's July 22nd 1994 Coup there has been significant educational development whilst others argue that there has been little change. In the following section, through the perceptions of Gambians, I examine the inefficient and sometimes corrupt politics of the Jawara government which have prolonged the Gambian educational crisis.



## **PART B**

### **5.6 *Jawara's (1965-1994) neo-colonialism and its impact upon the education system and teachers' professionalism***

I taught at The Gambia College for the last year of the Jawara regime and hence listened to Gambian perceptions of their political system. It is important to understand the political context of the Jawara regime and how its education policies impacted upon Gambian teachers' professionalism. In the following three sections I analyse the Jawara regime's educational contribution from the perspective of West African literature; Gambians in general and Lamin school teachers. I include a personal vignette illustrating the Jawara government's corruption.

The education legacies which The Gambian Government inherited from the Gambian colonial authorities at Independence still inhibit the development of The Gambian education system (Ball 1984). However thirty years after Independence it is disturbing to recognise that the inequities and structural problems highlighted in the previous section under colonialism remain. There is still a high percentage of unqualified primary school teachers (42%), and low enrolment, particularly in rural areas (Social Dimensions of Adjustment 1995).

The reasons for the continuing educational crisis are extremely complex and are to be found both within the national *and* international contexts. See Chapter One for a full discussion of these issues. Whilst acknowledging the damaging and inhibiting legacies of colonialism, it is not sufficient to *solely* blame colonialism for the current crisis within the Gambian education system. The Gambian

Government's record of educational provision under President Jawara during the twenty nine years between 1965 and 1994 must be critically examined.

In 1967, only two years after Gambian Independence, the Gambian poet/surgeon Lenrie Peters was already critical of the educational policies of the Right wing Gambian Prime Minister, later to become President Sir Dawda Jawara. The criticism thirty years on is still valid.

'But, excuse me, sir;  
We're free.  
Why do we have to beg?'  
Industrial development  
Dams, factories, the lot-  
change the face of the Continent.

'I see  
But my children -  
beg pardon Sir,  
will they go to school?'  
Later!  
'Will they have food to eat  
and clothes to wear?'  
Later I tell you!  
'Beg pardon Sir;  
a house like yours?'  
Put this man in jail.  
(Lenrie Peters 1967;84 in Hughes 1991).

Thirty years after Independence many Gambian parents are still asking the question 'will my children go to school?' The answer, especially to Junior secondary school and High School would still be 'later'. What are the politics, legitimating ideologies and policies which have allowed the crisis within The Gambian education system to continue beyond Independence to the present?

### **5.7 *Jawara's power and corruption: A personal experience***

At Heathrow airport, before I had even visited The Gambia for the first time I experienced the way in which Jawara and his family were able to use their power for personal benefit. The first time that I flew to The Gambia we sat for three hours in an Air Gambia plane on the runway at Heathrow. We were never told by the airline the reasons for this long delay. However just before we took off I and several other passengers saw three Mercedes unloading *Harrods* food hall bags from the cars. Upon enquiry we found out that the Mercedes and the shopping belonged to President Jawara's second wife. She must have been delayed in *Harrods* and telephoned Gambia Air to keep the plane waiting on the runway even though it was ready for take off. This vignette portrays the arrogant and selfish way in which Jawara and his family ruled The Gambia for 30 years. I was angry after waiting for 3 hours. Before I had even arrived in The Gambia I had begun to empathise with Gambians who had had to endure 30 years of such selfish behaviour from the Jawara regime. A Lamin School Grade One teacher who described the Jawara regime as 'eating' her country's money was figuratively and literally correct. Such personal experience lead me to believe that Jawara, at least at the end of his 30 year rule, no longer had the necessary enthusiasm to combat poverty and the associated education crisis.

### **5.8 *Gambian's euphoria surrounding the July 22nd 1994 Coup***

It is important to note that I was in The Gambia just after the 1994 Coup and the *euphoria* surrounding the political change was tangible. During my research in The Gambia, most Gambians I interacted with were critical of the Jawara government and were pleased that there had been a military coup which had

usurped Jawara's power. Jawara had been in power for over thirty years. For some Gambians Jawara had been in power for their whole adult lives and for Gambia College students, all their lives. Some Gambians told me that before the Coup they had lost hope in ever seeing political change in The Gambia. One teacher told me that she supported the change simply because it was a change. Hence the political change which completely swept aside the Jawara era was historic and monumental in people's lives. It is important to note that some Gambians I spoke with held contradictory feelings about Jawara. Several Gambians told me that they were proud that Jawara had helped to secure Gambian Independence from the British in 1965. Jawara they told me had been a Gambian patriot in the 1960s. They informed me that it was not Jawara himself who had been corrupt, but rather that he had been let down by his Ministers in the 1980s, some of whom embezzled funds. However most Gambians I spoke with were only too pleased that Jawara had gone. They did not hesitate to blame Jawara and his Ministers for the current Gambian crisis, including the education crisis.

I too was caught up in the euphoria surrounding the coup and like most Gambians felt that the possibility of a new dawn in The Gambia's fortunes might be breaking. The hope of change fuelled Gambians' dreams and mine alike. Some Gambians even referred to a social and political *revolution* as having taken place. Three years later in the clear bright light of day Gambian colleagues in this country and in The Gambia tell me that they are beginning to lose their zealous affection and enthusiasm for Jammeh. Stories of personal wealth accumulation and corruption, the very indictment which Jammeh made against Jawara, grow steadily (The Economist 1997). Hence it is important to note that the following data was collected in the context of the general euphoria that political *change*

had at last occurred in The Gambia. Nonetheless I was also in The Gambia one year *before* the Coup occurred and heard similar criticism of the Jawara regime even then.

In the following sections I examine 'stories' from Lamin School teachers and the Gambia Teacher's Union (GTU) Secretary General<sup>36</sup>. These stories serve to illustrate how teachers felt serving under the Jawara government and the governments' effects upon teachers' professionalism. The stories have been placed under separate headings; Jawara's corruption as it affects teachers' professionalism and training; secondary schools; and teachers' Civil Service Rights.

### ***5.9 Teachers' perceptions of the Jawara government's corruption***

Some Lamin School teachers were angry with the Jawara government or *regime* as they called it. Two teachers out of the 26 I interviewed told me that there had been little change with the new Government<sup>37</sup>. However most teachers in Lamin School perceived the Jawara Government as having wasted thirty years of potential economic development. From the numerous criticisms of Jawara's regime I selected the following.

'I feel *very very* angry sometimes when I think of the Jawara regime. They were just eating money. The top officials were just eating The Gambia's money whilst we were dying in the classroom from overwork. Sometimes teachers and other civil servants were not even paid properly. They stole our

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<sup>36</sup> It is important to note that there were strong political links between the GTU and the Jammeh's new Government.

<sup>37</sup> Some might argue that under a military regime, as it was up to December 1996, when I carried out these interviews, that people might have been frightened and intimidated to criticise the new Government. However I never saw or heard of such intimidation except between politicians.

money!!! Look we don't even have electricity in this school! (Grade 1 Primary Teacher). *This teacher raised her voice and gesticulated as she described her perceptions of the Jawara regime.*

'It's good to know that someone is in power who is working for the country and not just for himself unlike Jawara's regime. The previous regime was just here for themselves. - Jawara did *nothing* for this country' (Grade 3 Primary Teacher).

It is a severe *indictment* of the Jawara government to say that he was in power for himself for 30 years and that he and his Ministers were stealing money. The Grade One teacher directly attributes the poor physical state of Lamin school to the fact that Jawara's ministers embezzled state money. These teachers believed that Jammeh's new Government was more patriotic, less corrupt than Jawara's government. It is a criticism which I heard many times in different contexts from diverse Gambians ranging from Ministry of Education officials, foreign aid workers, teachers and agricultural workers. The Gambian National newspapers were full of the stories of Jawara's corruption whilst I was there. The following Grade 6 Lamin teacher described the recent changes as being a 'social and political revolution'.

'There has been a social and political revolution in The Gambia. Political revolution in the sense that people have now realised that the sort of corrupt politics that was going on in this country was very filthy.' (Grade 6 Teacher).

A Grade Three teacher informed me that under the previous regime the children had to bring in their own tables and chairs which are expensive to make. In other words it was popularly believed that because some members of the Jawara regime embezzled funds parents had to pay for the school furniture. The Master

of Lamin Primary school informed me that the former Government kept 'promising' to spend money on education but never actually did.

#### **5.10 *'Anybody could become a teacher under the Jawara regime'***

The Grade 3 Senior Master explained to me how under the Jawara government it was possible to become a teacher if you had the right connections. Teacher training was not necessary to become a teacher so long as you were connected to somebody powerful in the education system.

'Previously (under the Jawara Government) teachers were picked from anywhere but nowadays teachers are properly screened. In those days, if you have somebody to help you, you can become a teacher' (Grade 3 Senior Master).

Nepotism and the subsequent selection of incompetent teachers under the Jawara government served to undermine teachers' morale. This teacher was proud that now the Jawara era had passed, qualified and unqualified teachers had to be properly screened before they were allowed to teach. Standardised selection of competent teachers followed by their training has the effect of professionalising teachers.

#### **5.11 *The low transition rate from Primary to Secondary Schools under the Jawara government***

Of the number of children fortunate enough to be enrolled in primary school only 30% transfer to junior secondary school (Ministry of Education 1995). Even less make it to secondary school. Hence 80% of children in The Gambia do not

receive an academic education at junior secondary school and secondary school. Concerning the low transition rate from primary to junior secondary school the Ministry of Education stated ten years ago under the Jawara government,

'How useful are the drop-out of the primary school to our socio-economic development - bearing in mind that for 60-70% of primary school children there are no secondary places' (Ministry of Education 1983)

The transition rate to junior secondary school schools is slowly rising, particularly in urban areas. However the financial costs of sending children to junior secondary school is high and the cost of junior secondary schools are rising in line with World Bank Policy for user charges (see Chapter Nine).

Gambian parents tend to see education as a road (Social Dimensions of Adjustment 1995). The first step is the primary school, then junior secondary school and after completion, urban employment, a monthly salary and support for the family in the village. Almost half of rural Gambians earn less than 1500 Dalasis per year and junior secondary school fees and book charges alone are 600 Dalasis per year (Social Dimensions of Adjustment 1995). When rural parents know that they will not be able to afford the junior secondary school fees they see no point in sending their children to primary school (Social Dimensions of Adjustment 1995). Moreover it is interesting to note that increasingly a junior secondary school education does not guarantee a monthly salaried urban job. This is becoming apparent to rural Gambian parents and makes them reluctant to spend money on their children's education when the outcome is uncertain.

The Head of The Gambia Teachers' Union (GTU) told me the following



concerning the Jawara regime's secondary educational provision.

'The Jawara regime built some primary schools but *no* high schools in 33 years. This Government has built 4 high schools in one year.' (Gambia Teachers' Union General Secretary).

This is a severe indictment of the Jawara Government's education record and is reminiscent of the colonial governments attitude towards secondary education. Education, particularly secondary and tertiary education, can be threatening to the political status-quo hence its suppression by both the colonial government and subsequently Jawara's regime. In contrast the Head of the GTU praised the new Government for building 4 new high schools in its first year of power. There were just 89 qualified secondary school teachers at Independence working in six schools. Today there are 1,000 secondary school teachers working in 10 schools. Jawara's Government did not, however, open any new secondary schools. Moreover the Jawara government did not build a University in The Gambia even though plans for one were with the Jawara Government in the 1980s (Commonwealth Secretariat 1985).

The following teacher in Lamin Primary school also mentioned the lack of rural secondary schools.

'Before this revolution we had few Junior Secondary Schools in the Provinces after the children had taken their exams. They used to come down here! They have built many schools up-country. You would have to bring your children down here and find guardians for them' (Grade 3 classroom teacher).

The Jawara government did not build any junior secondary schools in the rural

provinces in its thirty two year reign. It is most disheartening for rural children and rural primary school teachers to know that there are very few secondary school places available. During the Jawara regime, rural children who had passed their Primary Leaving Certificate (PLC) and who wanted to attend secondary school would have to move down to the coast. This was most frustrating for the children, parents and teachers as this Grade 6 teacher told me

'I first joined the teaching field when Jawara was President. I was always frustrated when I saw children being dropped out of the system owing to the fact that there was a lack of secondary schools. But now we have a lot of schools. We have a lot more Junior Secondary Schools where they can go. This makes me feel better as a teacher because I don't wanted to see children I have taught becoming street boys and girls after having gone to school. Because of Jawara we had an unavailability of schools and the children couldn't go' (Grade 6 Teacher).

This teacher speaks of always being frustrated whilst working under the Jawara government because of the lack of schools and hence the high drop out rate. Now however he 'feels better' due to the new government building more Junior Secondary schools. As a teacher he now feels better about his profession due to the political changes.

### ***5.12 Teachers' civil service rights under the Jawara government***

It is contradictory that the Jawara Government ensured that qualified teachers be paid on the Civil Service pay scale but be refused access to knowledge of the Civil Service rights and privileges. Qualified Gambian teachers, because their salary is on the Civil Service pay scale receive the best teaching salaries in West Africa (see Chapter ten). The Master of Lamin School was particularly frustrated

with the Jawara government's withholding of information concerning teachers' rights and privileges as members of the Civil Service.

'Before (the coup) we did not even know our privileges and rights as teachers because you could not lay your hands on the Civil Service General Orders' (Lamin School Headteacher).

The Civil Service General Orders detail a teacher's regional salary, travelling and housing allowances. It is an indictment of the Jawara government that even a headteacher was not informed of their civil service salary entitlements. The withholding of such information has the effect of undermining the teaching force. If teachers do not have the knowledge of their rights and privileges then they are unable to claim professional status.

A Grade six teacher agreed with Master.

'For the first time there is civil education going on in this country and even we as teachers are striving to know what our political rights are. A panel was chosen from the new leaders and they had a nation wide tour in which people were taught their basic and civil rights so in a sense that is a political revolution' (Grade Six Teacher).

Whilst on an up-country research trip to Basse with The Gambia College, I met the panel. 'The July 22nd Movement' as they were known were part of a nation-wide tour which attempted to educate people in their democratic and human rights. It had as its goal a consciousness raising agenda. These, it was claimed, had been ignored by Jawara. This teacher was pleased that such a tour had occurred since such human rights education programmes add to the professional respect of teachers.

The above quotes highlight the teachers' frustrations with Jawara regime's lack of educational financing. It must be noted that the Jawara Government, although not effective at developing Gambian education, particularly post-primary, did produce policy documents. These policy documents are discussed in the next section.

## **PART C**

### ***5.13 The first ten year Gambian Education Policy 1976-1986 and the building of Lamin Primary School***

It was not until eleven years after Independence in 1976 that the first ten year Gambian Education Policy document was written. The fact that it took over a decade to produce The Gambia's first national policy document is an indication of the Jawara government's priorities. Indeed the *lack* of a policy document is reminiscent of the Colonial Government's ambivalence towards Gambian education. During the ten year period of the policy 1976 to 1986 primary school enrolment significantly increased. The statistics are fully discussed in a subsequent section. It is interesting to note that despite the Gambian government's rhetoric espousing Primary school 'education for all', finance in the form of materials and buildings were not provided to support such an important and critical initiative.

The significant rise in primary school enrolment during the First National Education Policy 1976-1986 was *largely* due to urban Gambian communities desire for Western education rather than a Government initiated and financed education project. Under a policy known as *tesito funding* or local funding, those

communities who wanted a school had to build one themselves. Lamin Primary school was built by *tesito* funding in 1983. Government did *not* provide the finance for the building of the school. Such a financial undertaking by the local community, usually a group of concerned parents, required tremendous effort and organisation. It must be noted that 80% of Lamin Primary School parents are subsistence farmers who have little extra money hence the desire for Western education for their children must have been great.

Once a school such as Lamin had been built by the community, Government then provided the school with teachers, albeit half of whom were often unqualified. Government paid the teachers' salaries. Hence it is critical to note that Lamin's community and *not* the government paid for the original school buildings. Subsequent buildings which have been added to the school have been paid for by the Children's Christian Fund (CCF) and the Anglican Missions. Consequently, none of Lamin School's buildings have been paid for by the Gambian Government.

A National Conference on Education was held in 1986 to review the goals and strategies of education in The Gambia. The outcome of this conference was the Second Education Policy of The Gambia which runs from 1988-2003. In the following section I examine the policy's aims and objectives which were current at the time of the research.

#### 5.14 *The Second Gambian Education Policy 1988-2003*

The Second Education Policy changed the structure of education and provided the philosophy and strategy for education in The Gambia. The new Government has not changed this education policy. The Second Education Policy states that the guiding principle for Gambian education is as follows.

‘The Gambia’s most precious resource is its people and this wealth must be developed for the good of the individual and the nation’ (Gambian Ministry of Education 1988).

This philosophy of equating the wealth of The Gambia with the education of its people underpins the 1988-2003 Education policy. The Gambian Government argues that sustainable socio-economic development cannot be achieved without education (Ministry of Education 1995;13). The Government also states that without developing the knowledge and skills of its people, a country’s material resources, no matter how great, cannot be efficiently utilised for the improvement of life (Ministry of Education 1995).

The three main educational objectives which the policy aimed to improve were, **access**, **relevance** and **quality**. It is crucial to note that concerns about the quality of education are located within a context of the high population growth rate of 4.1%<sup>38</sup>. The Deputy Chief Education Officer explained that given The Gambia’s financial constraints, it was proving highly problematic to meet the

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<sup>38</sup> This high population growth rate coupled with the economic crisis of the 1980’s and 1990’s has led to increased poverty, illiteracy rates, infant, child and maternal mortality (Social Dimensions of Adjustment 1995).

population growth's continual pressure to increase access to education whilst maintaining the quality of that education.

Hence the twin goals of increasing both access and quality within a limited budget were, according to the permanent civil servant I spoke to proving extremely difficult to maintain. Increasingly parents are paying for improvements in access and quality through Policy initiatives of the World Bank (see Chapter Nine).

Guided by the principles of equity, relevance and quality the fifteen year 1988-2003 Education Policy set out to

- raise the Primary Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) from its 51% level in 1986 to 75% by 2003. The GER stood at 59% in 1995 hence it is unlikely that the target of 75% will be reached by 2003. It must be emphasised that the main reasons for this are the shortage of funds to build new schools and pay for teachers coupled with a rapidly rising school age population.
- increase the transition rate from primary school to junior secondary school to 70% by 2003. In 1990 the transition rate was less than 35%. There have recently been dramatic improvements in the transition rate, the context of which is discussed later in this chapter.
- lower the entry age from 8 to 7 years in 1990. This has been successfully completed.
- develop a broad-based, less academic orientated curriculum for basic education
- to radically improve the quality of basic education, *by training all unqualified teachers* and increasing expenditure on learning materials. In 1995

unqualified primary teachers still represented 42% of the primary teaching force. This critical issue which effects the professionalism of primary teachers is discussed in Chapter nine.

- to increase access to post-secondary vocational training, while improving the co-ordination of its provision and its relevance to the job market
- to continue to promote and co-ordinate a selective intensive approach to increase literacy. (Ministry of Education 1993).

The financing available to education has so far proved a major bottleneck in achieving the above objectives of the 1988-2003 education policy. The Ministry of education notes that

‘Mobilising new resources and increasing the efficiency of spending are considered preconditions to a successful implementation of this policy’ (Ministry of Education 1993).

Hence not only is extra finance needed if the policy is to succeed but also the money already available must be utilised more efficiently. In addition the Ministry notes that management of the education sector needs to be improved. In the following section the structure of The Gambian education system and the curriculum is analysed.



### **5.15 The structure of The Gambian education system**

Geographically The Gambia is divided into six educational regions. The Gambia College and Lamin Primary school are located in Region 2.

The Gambia operates a 6+3+3 education structure.

- 6 years of primary education. Grades 1-6
- 3 years of junior secondary school. Grades 6-9
- 3 years of senior secondary school. Grades 9-12

There are no fees for primary education, however there are relatively expensive school fees for junior secondary and senior secondary school. Although there are no primary school fees, World Bank User Charges (See Chapter Nine) are making the costs of primary education increasingly expensive for parents. Costs include book rental, uniforms, food, travel and lost revenue opportunity whilst the child is at school and not working for the family.

At the end of primary school there is a competitive exam for entry into junior secondary school. This is due to the shortage of junior secondary schools and places. Grades One to nine have a common curriculum which includes English, Maths, General Science, Social Studies, Physical Education, Art and Craft, Music, Religious Education and Population and Family Life Education. At the end of Grade 9 there is a further exam to admit students to three years of senior secondary school.

In the following section statistics are provided of the growth of primary school enrolment and primary school teachers since Independence. These statistics help the reader to place teachers' careers within the overall Gambian education

system.

### ***5.16 Gambian Primary school enrolment since independence in 1967 to the present***

Gross Primary Enrolment Ratio<sup>39</sup> (GPER) throughout The Gambia was 20% at Independence. During the first education policy of 1976-1986 there was tremendous growth in all sectors of the education system, particularly the primary sector. Access to primary education improved considerably during the 1970's and early 1980's resulting in improved primary enrolment rates. Primary school enrolment which was 25,000 in 1975/6 rose to 74,000 in 1986/7. This represents an annual growth rate of approximately 9%.

However, in the late 1980s Gross Primary Enrolment Ratios (GPER) in The Gambia *declined* from 61% to 57% (Ministry of Education 1995). In the last five years the enrolment ratio has levelled and is now rising again and presently stands at 59%. This is a national figure which masks the difference between rural and urban areas. The decline is sharper in rural areas than in urban areas. The enrolment declined during the late 1980s due to several factors. These include the rapid population growth; the lowering of the school entry age in 1989 from age

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<sup>39</sup> Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) =  $\frac{\text{Gross Enrolment} \times 100}{\text{Population of the relevant age group}}$

8 to age 7; and an economy which was shrinking due to the introduction of World Bank Economic Recovery Programmes (ERP) which reduced school and teacher numbers.

The Primary school Gross Enrolment Ratio can only ever slowly rise because of the rapid population growth of 4.1%, one of the highest in the world.

The school age population has risen approximately five fold since Independence (Social Dimensions of Adjustment 1995). The rapidly rising primary school age population means that in order to keep enrolment ratios at their current level many more classrooms need to be built each year and teachers employed. A useful metaphor is that of trying to fill a bath without a plug. The water level represents the enrolment ratio which the Gambian government is trying to raise. The taps represent the resources which are flowing into the system. The resources are the schools and the teachers which allow the enrolment ratio/water level to rise. The plug hole represents the ever growing school age population which drains the incoming resources of teachers and schools. The enrolment ratio/water level in the bath can only ever rise very slowly because although there is a large amount of resources put into the system the plug hole (the rising population of school age children) continues to widen and drain the ever increasing resources as fast as they are put into the system. Hence the result of the increasing population growth rate is that the enrolment rate is very difficult to raise.

It must be noted that Islamic education, in the form of *dara* schools and Qur'anic schools, has historically and presently been an active choice for some Gambian parents especially in rural areas (Social Dimensions of Adjustment 1995). In rural

areas in the local languages, Western or formal schools still go under the name of *Tubab-schools*, which translates as 'the school of the white man'. Only a minority of rural farmers send their children to these Western schools. The following quote aptly sums up one important reason why rural Gambian parents choose to send their children to Qur'anic schools.

'Many parents in this community believe that if they send their children to Tubab schools, they will lose heavenly blessing on the day of judgement' (Teacher at rural primary school; Social Dimensions of Adjustment 1995).

Hence it can be seen that Islam is still a very important reason for the low primary enrolment in rural areas. Poverty, particularly amongst rural Gambians, is also a further important reason for the low enrolment rate in rural areas as the following quote illustrates.

'These days when there is no moon and I cannot see to study in the night. Then I tell my mother that I cannot make my homework. But she says that when she cannot even afford to buy rice how will she afford to buy candles for me every day (Rural school boy; Social Dimensions of Adjustment 1995).

In this rural family there is not enough cash for *both* food and education, hence the boy's education suffers. There certainly will not be sufficient money for middle school fees. Education is perceived as a financial proposition (Social Dimensions of Adjustment 1995), so the boy may be withdrawn from primary school. It is also important to note that primary education is not compulsory in The Gambia. Hence poor parents are legally allowed to use the labour of their children to support them.

### ***5.17 Primary School teacher numbers since independence***

In 1967 there were 308 qualified primary school teachers in The Gambia at Independence (The Republic of The Gambia 1967, Ministry of Education). However in 1993 there were still only 1,500 qualified primary teachers in The Gambia. In 30 years there has only been an increase of little more than a thousand qualified primary teachers in the profession (The Republic of The Gambia, Ministry of Education 1993). During the same period the school age population has risen from 100,000 to 500,000. At Independence in 1965, 35% of primary teachers were unqualified. Today 45% of primary teachers in The Gambia are unqualified. Hence proportionately the number of unqualified teachers within the Gambian education system remains unacceptably high. This is due to the limited funds available for the costs of teacher training which are expensive. In addition I was informed by several teachers that World Bank funds set aside specifically for the training of unqualified teachers had been misappropriated by members of the Jawara Government. The Deputy Chief Education Officer informed me that the Ministry of Education was attempting to phase out all unqualified teachers by 1998. The following is an outline of primary staff careers and salary profiles.

### ***5.18 Staff careers and salary profiles***

The Ministry of Education has classified three sizes of primary school in The Gambia based upon their student numbers; Class A Schools with 100-399 children; Class B schools with 400-799 children; Class C schools 800+ children.

Lamin is classified as a Class C school. The schools' management and salary

levels are worked out according to the size of the school. Thus in a Class C school the Head and the Deputy Head are paid at a higher level than the Head and Deputy Head of a Class A school. Class C schools have the additional management of Senior Masters and Mistresses.

Senior Masters and Mistresses do not teach a particular class, rather they act as mini-headteachers. Each year group has approximately 6 classes and 300 children which is equivalent to a small primary school. Hence the Senior Masters and Mistresses in effect act as Headteachers of the different year groups. They are responsible for the quality of the teaching, registers, discipline and act as mentors to the less experienced teachers in their year groups.

The following diagram shows the primary school career structures and salary levels for each position in the different sized primary schools. It is important to note that a teacher must progress through each stage before passing to the next. Thus a Senior Mistress cannot become a Headteacher without first becoming a Deputy Headteacher. (See Appendix Two for Salary Scales).

#### HEADTEACHER

- Class A School - Salary Grade 8
- Class B School - Salary Grade 9
- Class C School - Salary Grade 10

#### DEPUTY HEADTEACHER

- Class A School - Salary Grade 7
- Class B School - Salary Grade 8
- Class C School - Salary Grade 9

## SENIOR MASTER/MISTRESS

Class A School - Salary Grade 7

Class B School - Salary Grade 8

Class C School - Salary Grade 9

## QUALIFIED TEACHER

Class A School - Salary Grade 6

Class B School - Salary Grade 6

Class C School - Salary Grade 6

## UNQUALIFIED TEACHER

Class A School - Salary Grade 1

Class B School - Salary Grade 1

Class C School - Salary Grade 1

It can be seen from the above that teachers who work in the larger Class B and Class C urban schools can progress through the career structure and attain a higher salary than those teachers who work in smaller Class A rural schools. Thus most teachers wish to be posted in the urban schools where it is considered more desirable than the rural areas.

## **PART D**

### **5.19 The July 22nd 1994 Coup and its structural effects upon The Gambian education system- 'Not less than a miracle in the progression of education in The Gambia'.**

In this section I discuss how teachers feel about the political changes, specifically the way in which those changes effect the *structure* of the Gambian education system. It is important to note the *enthusiasm* with which Jammeh's new Government has embraced the development of education. The following quote from the Ministry of Education 1995/96 statistics is reflective of this enthusiasm

'Notwithstanding the limited resources available in The Gambia for all round development in all the key sectors through out the country, the access to education continued its march to progress during 1995/96. This could be possible due to the government policy with strong commitment to provide basic education to its children. In other words, *the new Government laid very special emphasis inter alia on education* and the impact of which is apparent from the current education statistics' (Ministry of Education 1995, my emphasis).

It is important to note that the dramatic rise in the number of new schools and school places is largely due to the political coup, the leaders of which decided to allocate significant new financial resources to education. This is even more significant when one realises that it was a *military* coup and that sources of international funding, especially from the U.S. were withheld until the military government stepped down and held democratic elections. This has now successfully occurred.



## **5.20 15% Increase in school buildings in one year**

The *first* year following the July 22nd coup, that is 1995/96, 58 new schools in all the three education levels of Tertiary, Secondary and Primary levels were opened. This is described as '*not less than a miracle in the progression of education in The Gambia*' (Ministry of Education 1995/96). During the 33 years of the Jawara regime no Senior Secondary schools were built. The present Jammeh Government has built 6 Senior Secondary schools, 14 junior secondary schools and 38 primary schools in its first year of power (MOE 1997). This represents a 15% annual increase in provision which is highly significant. The first University in The Gambia opened in September 1997 (The Times Higher Education Supplement 1997). Concerning this tremendous growth in educational provision the international press has noted

'Good news in The Gambia: the number of schools is expanding by 15% a year, but money and resources to run them are scarce' (The Times Educational Supplement; 1997).

Despite the fact that there has been such a dramatic rise in educational buildings there remains a problem with the staffing of the new schools. The Master at Lamin Primary School informed me that there was not enough money in the budget for *both* the buildings and the teachers. Hence once the school buildings have been completed the money for teaching training and teachers' salaries can be found.

There has already been a 5% increase in the transition rate from primary school to secondary school (Government of The Gambia 1996). However once the

staffing issues, particularly for the new junior secondary schools have been resolved a dramatic increase in the transition rate from primary to secondary school is expected. The following quote from the Head of the Gambia Teachers' Union is reflective of the new optimism within the Gambian education system brought about largely because of the structural improvements. The GTU which represents teachers' views and petitions Government on their behalf gives its unequivocal support to the new Government. It is important to note that the Head of the GTU holds a powerful position within the new Government. However his feelings on these issues were triangulated and lent support by Lamin School teachers.

'There has been a sharp focus on structural development in education. The GTU is happy that there are significant changes both in quantity & quality of education.

It is now MUCH BETTER! The structural changes have meant that primary teachers feel better in themselves. The most significant effect of the revolution as regards education is the improvement of the transition rate from primary to secondary school. They feel much better that their products are now being transferred very smoothly to secondary school. Teachers feel very good that these issues are being addressed (The Gambia Teachers' Union President).

It can be seen that the GTU is very pleased with the changes the new Government has brought in, particularly concerning the improved transition rate. It is interesting to note that teachers '*feel better*' about the changes. Feeling better about ones work as a teacher adds to teachers' morale (Nias 1989). Hence political changes which support teachers can have beneficial effects upon the status of teachers.

The following quote from a Lamin School Teacher shows that the new Government is also committed to paying for the refurbishment of classrooms.

'We also have enough books now and furniture. Previously a child would bring his or her own furniture to school. The government is trying to do away with the tesito attitude that the parents must provide. The parents don't want it because it is a problem for the family. It used to cost D100. The furniture they are supplying is of a very good quality too. It helps us as teachers.' (Grade 3 Classroom teacher).

Thus teachers access to resources has improved with the new Government. There are now enough books and furniture. Providing sufficient resources to do the job helps in the process of teacher professionalisation.

### ***5.21 Primary school enrolments and primary school teacher numbers have risen***

Even though there has been a dramatic rise in the provision of primary school places during 1995/6 this is not currently reflected in the Gross Enrolment Ratios. The GER has risen by only 2% because of the rapidly rising population growth, especially of school age children. (I examined this crucial issue in a previous section on primary school enrolments).

The following table shows the total number of primary teachers for the last four years. It can be seen that within the academic year 1995/96, the year in which the new Government were in power, the total number of numbers teachers compared to the previous years has substantially risen. The context within which primary teachers make their careers is an expanding one. This is a most significant factor to bear in mind when analysing Lamin school teachers' career

expectations.

1992/93	1993/94	1994/95	1995/96
3,158	3,193	3,370	4,118

**Table 5.1 Showing Growing Total Number of Primary School Teachers.**

(The Government of The Gambia 1996)

In the next section I discuss Lamin School teachers' perceptions of the education changes which have occurred since the 1994 coup.

### **5.22 Lamin School teachers' perceptions of the political changes**

The following teachers' comments were typical of teachers' positive responses when I asked about the new Government. It must be noted that some teachers did not feel this way and I quote from them later in this section.

**'I feel very good about the changes going on with this new government. They are giving more consideration to education than the previous one. And I think they realise that education is the backbone of education in any society. It seems that they are pumping more money into education so that it becomes more efficient. It encourages me also to stay on in the profession and take an active part also in the changes.....Most teachers I think would agree with that. It has not yet changed totally but the process is on, the process of change. Teachers' lifestyles have improved. Because before most teachers will tell that I am just teaching here as a stepping stone into other professions. Most teachers would have just taught for a year or two and pack their bags and go. ....But now I don't hear that stepping stone**

idea anymore. **So it seems as if things are really changing.**

..... I think that there is a growing recognition by the politicians that education is the backbone for the development of the nation. **So now teachers feel more accepted by the government and the society.**

.... **Before it was considered just as a dustbin for dropouts. But those of us that stayed feel very proud now. Because most people are looking to get into the profession now. It has got tougher to get in. There has been a great deal of positive change with this new Government. Nowadays teaching is a very good profession'** (Grade 3 Senior Master).

This teacher, whom I interviewed over three separate periods in all totalling one and a half hours, feels that the political changes have *professionalised* (see Chapter Five) the teaching force. This teacher was considering leaving the teaching profession before the new Government came to power. Now however he has changed his mind and wishes to stay in the profession. Before the political changes he states that teaching was a job which people simply functionally used as a 'stepping stone' to access other jobs which they preferred to do if they got the chance. This idea he states is now disappearing. For this teacher teaching is no longer considered as a job of last resort or as 'a dustbin for dropouts' but rather as a desirable profession which is hard to get into.

This teacher attributes the dramatic reversal in the professional status of teachers, from one of low morale to one of increasingly high morale, to the political changes. Critically, as a teacher he feels that the Government and hence society, accept and appreciate the role of teachers in Gambian national development. This teacher feels *proud* to be a member of the teaching profession. The Master of Lamin School reiterated the improved

self-respect that teachers now have for their profession. Once again he attributes this to the political changes which have occurred.

'Well as a Headteacher I feel better now. Yes because the new Government although early to say they have shown great interest in education. **With this new government we have realised new schools built, furnished & even the old ones they found they are trying to furnish them and change the situation.**

***Teachers are more respected now than before the political changes.*** Why- Because there was no area of embezzlement for teachers. **And this is part of the process that teachers are becoming more and more respected.** The new Government has established these public Commissions of Inquiry into corruption but no teachers are under enquiry. **So the teachers themselves are getting more and more proud.'** (Headteacher Lamin Primary School).

Like the General Secretary of the Gambia Teachers' Union, Master believes the educational rhetoric of the new Government because they have built many new schools and refurbished the old ones. Crucially Master attributes the increased respect which teachers have for themselves and from society to the political changes brought in by the new Government. The new Government has established 'Commissions of Enquiry' which attempt to investigate and prosecute former corrupt Government departments, ministers and workers. To date no member of the teaching profession has been brought before a Commission of Inquiry for corrupt practices. This reinforces the patriotic image which teachers have of themselves (see Chapters Six and Seven). Thus teachers are increasingly feeling pride and self-respect in their profession.

The following quotes are all from female teachers. Female teachers only represent 29% of primary teachers (Secretariat of the National Population Commission 1993). Hence it is highly significant that they feel that the new Government is supportive of female teachers.

**'This new government is doing well for teachers and for children because they are building more schools in the Provinces. They are doing well! We even have a female Minister of Education! (Female Grade Two Teacher).**

**'The new Government is doing wonders not just for women but for everybody. They are improving our education system. They have given priority to education and that is wonderful.'** (Senior Mistress Grade 4).

***I feel better now as a teacher.*** This government is putting the money where it should be. They are investing the money in the state; schools, hospitals and roads. We also have national television and CNN. We learn a lot from this. **I feel very good about this. I am really enjoying The Gambia now and feel things can really improve here.'** (Female Grade One Teacher).

The new Government appointed a female Minister for the first time in The Gambia. These female teachers see her as a role model for themselves. The Grade One teacher 'feels better now' because she can see that the Government is investing not just in education but in other areas of the state as well such as health and transport and a national television station. She feels that the national context within The Gambia is improving.

Concerning the critical issue of salaries and the new Government, Lamin School Teachers stated the following to me.

**'Jammeh is trying very well for us. Now we receive early salaries, even by the 17th for the Christmas holiday. (Grade 3 Teacher).**

This Grade One teacher is pleased that she now receives her salary earlier in the month. The Grade One teacher personally feels that Jammeh has the teaching profession in his best interests. This is important since if she believes that the Head of State respects the teaching profession then as a teacher she is encouraged to believe in her professional status. This teacher takes the early payment of her salary, in time for Christmas, as proof of Jammeh's good faith in the teaching profession.

Master notes that teachers' Civil Service privileges, something ignored by the previous Government are now paid to teachers.

'Teachers' wages are paid earlier than it used to be. And whatever allowances you claim are taken care of, your local transfer allowances, your house rent, longevity. (Master)

Observing teachers' Civil Service rights and privileges adds to the professional status of teachers.

It is important to note that some teachers did not share their colleague's enthusiasm for the political changes. In the following section I examine those teachers who were more critical of the recent political changes.

### ***5.23 'The new Government are just opportunists as well'***

The following teachers told me the following concerning the new Government.

'The new Government are just opportunists as well. They are just concerned with themselves' (Grade Four teacher).



**'There is no difference. It is the same now as it was before. The problems we are encountering now is the same problems as before. Our salaries are very small. You hear many people supporting the new Government. I am telling you the truth. Nothing has changed.'** (Female Grade Two teacher).

**'There's not much change for us teachers yet. I don't see any changes. The military are just opportunists. Teaching has not changed at all. How we feel about ourselves is the same now as before the coup. They have built more schools and employed more UQTs. These are the only changes.'** (Grade Three teacher).

These teachers views are significant in the light of the increasing rumours concerning Jammeh's corruption (The Economist 1997; Yeebo 1995). In a thesis which attempts to highlight the diversity of Gambian teachers' experiences such criticism is important.

## ***Conclusion***

It would seem that the present socio-economic conditions within The Gambia offer both advantages and disadvantages to the process of teacher professionalisation. According to *some* teachers, Ministry of Education officials and the Gambia Teacher's Union<sup>40</sup>, the present political and economic conditions *may* possibly be the most favourable in recent Gambian history for the professionalisation of teachers. Some Gambians argue that perhaps for the first time in Gambian politics there is a Government in power which has the best interests of teachers in mind. Other Gambians argue that the Coup has changed nothing except the names of corrupt politicians. However it would seem that the

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political rhetoric has been manifested in increased resources for education. Hence the number of school buildings is growing by 15% per year. The teachers I spoke with felt this was good for the profession. Improving access, which is desperately needed for socio-economic development, drains The Gambia's scarce economic resources. The physical development of the Gambian education system is a sign of the respect and esteem which society increasingly holds for teachers. This increased status within society serves to professionalise teachers. The physical development of the education system also provides more career opportunities which may also help to professionalise teachers.

In addition in the following two chapters I examine teacher's fervent nationalism and national educational development which both the Government and the teachers are committed to. Such shared national educational objectives between the teachers and the Government serves to enhance teachers professional status within society.

However it is critical to note that the current education policy 1988-2003 attempts to improve *both access and quality* of education at the same time, *crucially within a restricted Gambian education budget*. Achieving an increase in both quality and access *currently* is not possible since there is a shortage of money to achieve both goals. Although there are significantly more schools after the coup, it seems that they are being staffed by unqualified teachers who are being redeployed from urban schools. Some Lamin School *unqualified* teachers I interviewed were being redeployed when I left The Gambia. I managed to conduct some research on this important issue which is connected with pupil-teacher ratios set by the World Bank. This critical issue is discussed in the following chapter.

Thus the current education policy has contradictory effects upon teachers' professionalism. Prima facie increasing access to education might seem to lend itself towards professionalisation. However, in the short term at least, increasing access to education, merely serves to increase class numbers and the continued employment of unqualified teachers. In the following chapter I examine the effects of structural change upon Gambian teachers' lives and careers.

## **Chapter Six:**

### ***World Bank Structural Adjustment and its Contradictory Effects Upon Lamin's Teachers***

#### ***Introduction***

In order to understand the social and political 'genealogies' (Goodson 1995) which currently constitute Gambian teachers' stories and narratives it is necessary to appreciate the wider international context within which the Gambian Ministry of Education and thus its teachers, are placed. Whatever the policies of The Government of The Gambia, it is subject to external economic pressures, such as the World Bank. Economic crises, which effect education, are not solely of The Gambian Government's own making, but are brought about by trends in the global economic system and by the policies of governments in the industrialised North. (Graham-Brown 1991).

Hence in this chapter I explore the World Bank's structural adjustment programme in The Gambia. I discuss the damaging effects of structural adjustment upon Gambian education. Both the growth rate in the number of children enrolled and the numbers of teachers employed has declined since the introduction of structural adjustment. Teachers' work in Gambian urban primary schools has been dramatically intensified through the introduction of the double

shift policy. The major focus of this chapter is a discussion of the contradictory effects of the implementation of the double shift policy (Roberts-Holmes 1997) . On the one hand there has been a doubling of a teachers' work load. This severe intensification of teachers' work has led to a reduction in the quality of education provided. On the other hand the double shift policy has increased children's access to primary education; reduced the number of unqualified teachers and thus enhanced the professional status of teaching; and given the teachers' financial advantages. This chapter concludes with a discussion concerning the teachers' inadvertent facilitation of the double shift because of teachers' wishes to play a part in the development The Gambia.

### ***6.1 What is Structural Adjustment?***

'Structural Adjustment' is a term which is used to describe a programme or package of economic reforms advocated by the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (Clarke and Davies 1991). Structural Adjustment is advocated for countries who are heavily indebted. These debts were built up during the 1970's for development projects which were often encouraged by the World Bank (Onimode 1984). Structural Adjustment is designed to 'adjust' the economy away from Government spending on human development policies, such as education and health, towards policies servicing the interest on those World Bank debts (Graham-Brown 1991). To service those existing debts and to finance further development projects governments are forced to take out new loans.

However it would appear that Structural Adjustment is not working. Even The World Bank has stated that 'no country undergoing rescheduling has significantly improved its debt ratios' (The World Bank 1989 in Clarke and Davies 1991). An UNCTAD report (1989) (United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, an agency of the United Nations Organisation) concluded that there was no evidence that the privatisation, liberalisation and budgetary reforms inherent with the Structural Adjustment programmes had led to the economic growth that had been anticipated (UNCTAD 1989 in Clarke and Davies 1991). In a scathing attack upon Structural Adjustment Graham-Brown states,

'Economic 'adjustment' has largely been externally imposed, and its main aim is not to develop the economies of the countries concerned but to ensure that they keep paying their debts'. (Graham-Brown 1991;18).

Given the World Bank's and United Nations own critiques of Structural Adjustment, it is difficult to see why the World Bank retains the programme.

## 6.2 World Bank 'Re-colonisation' of Africa

Onimode claims that because the World Bank dictates countries' economic and educational policies, terms and conditions that the sovereignty of those countries are in jeopardy.

'...the IMF (International Monetary Fund) and the World Bank have emerged as the *New Masters* of Africa....from domination by the colonialists to domination by the IMF and World Bank' (Onimode 1980;280).

Onimode argues that African countries such as The Gambia are being *re-colonised* by the World Bank and IMF. The World Bank loans are conditional upon the Ministry implementing their prescribed educational policies.

'Ministry of Education is trying to satisfy World Bank conditionality. We get loans on condition that we carry out their suggestions' (Deputy Chief Education Officer, Ministry of Education).

Later in this chapter I discuss the 'double shift' policy imposed by the World Bank upon The Gambian Ministry of Education. In May 1995 I went to visit the Planning Unit of the Ministry of Education. I was perplexed to find that none of the dozen or so staff were there. Subsequently I was informed that some World Bank consultants, who were staying at the five star Fajara Hotel, had requested a meeting with the Planning Unit *in the Fajara Hotel*. For me the location of the meeting was deeply symbolic. The meeting *in The Gambia* between the

Government of The Gambia, Education Ministry Officials and the World Bank consultants did not take place in the Government offices in Banjul as one might expect but rather in the World Bank's hotel suite. The fact that the World Bank consultants did not make the half hour journey into Banjul displays a lack of respect to The Government of The Gambia ( and the World Bank's power). Equally the Planning Unit should have insisted that the meeting took place in the Ministry of Education.

Structural Adjustment is thus controversial. It fails to recognise the scale of the developing countries economic crisis and the depth of the international injustice upon which world economics are premised (Oxfam 1991). Structural Adjustment attempts to paper over the deep cracks in the world economy, when they need mending, not adjustment.

### ***6.3 The World Bank Structural Adjustment Policies in The Gambia***

In 1985 the World Bank begun to implement Structural Adjustment of The Gambian economy. Structural Adjustment was judged to be 'successful' by both the Jawarra regime and the World Bank (Yeebo 1995). However despite the rhetoric of the Jawarra regime and the World Bank, the living standards of the majority of Gambians had declined throughout the ten year period of Structural Adjustment (Yeebo 1995). Concerning the Gambian government's capitulation to Structural Adjustment the Ghanaian journalist and writer Yeebo noted



'Like other Governments in West Africa the Jawarra regime also fell prey to the con-trick perpetrated by the World Bank, the IMF and their western masters: that a Structural Adjustment Programme necessarily leads to poverty alleviation' (Yeebo 1995; 16).

The false expectation that Structural Adjustment would lead to poverty alleviation was finally admitted by the Jawarra government in 1994 just before it was deposed<sup>41</sup>. In an extraordinarily honest statement Jawarra's Minister for Finance and Economic Planning said:

'After ten years of Structural Adjustment, what we should do now is to try and improve the standards of living of the people' (The Daily Observer 15th July 1994).

It was evident that even the Jawarra government itself did not believe the World Bank rhetoric concerning Structural Adjustment. The Gambia's debt crisis is an indication of the enormity of the economic crisis facing the country. In 1996 The Gambia owed \$ 382 million (Yeebo 1995). Forty percent of The Gambia's public expenditure is spent on paying interest off on this debt (Williams 1992). It is argued that The Gambia is most unlikely to be able to pay off this debt (Kea

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<sup>41</sup> It was widely believed that the poverty inflicted upon people by Structural Adjustment was partially responsible for the 1994 Coup. When I was a lecturer at The Gambia College there was a major riot and uprising against the authorities which involved thousands of people in Brikama where I lived. (Fortunately the campus of the College was not involved). In April 1994 Brikama Council had attempted to introduce a charge for water. For most people in Brikama their only source of water were the standpipes in the streets. As part of its User Cost Recovery Scheme the World Bank, in alliance with Brikama Council, attempted to charge people for each bucket of water used. The threat of this imposed charge led to the uprising. As the national paper stated this riot subsequently encouraged the Coup in July of that year (The Daily Observer April 22nd 1994).

1997). 40% of The Gambian Government's income being spent on servicing of debt practically translates into lack of finance to develop policies aimed at combating poverty. In the following section I introduce some of the effects of Structural Adjustment upon education in Africa.

#### **6.4 The Effects of Structural Adjustment upon Education in Africa**

Onimode, a Nigerian economist, notes the effects of Structural Adjustment upon education in Nigeria.

'The collapse of the welfare state has created serious education, health and housing problems from the combined effects of expenditure cuts, *subsidy withdrawal* and huge debt service' (Onimode 1988;290 *my emphasis*).

Hence Structural Adjustment has had a detrimental effect upon the funding of African education. Obasi (1997) feels that the World Bank's insistence that African states withdraw *their* educational subsidies is hypocritical. Obasi (1997) points out that the European and US economies did not have to withdraw subsidies in education in order to run the free market economy. Instead they have consistently used subsidies as a government intervention strategy to achieve some measure of equity and efficiency (Obasi 1997). Obasi is highly critical of the policy implications of Structural Adjustment on education. These policy implications include severe cuts in government spending on education,

cost curtailment and recovery in education and the withdrawal of educational subsidies.

In many African countries the effects of Structural Adjustment upon educational provision have been dire; a reduction in boys' and girls' participation in primary education (the reduction is more significant for girls), the drop in the number of pupils completing primary education, the fall in the quality of instruction and the rising number of illiterates in Africa. The worsening state of some aspects of education in African countries such as Nigeria and The Gambia is caused mainly by

**'the severe resource cuts to the education sector, as well as the adjustment policies of cost recovery and containment. This is an unambiguous endorsement to the fact that Structural Adjustment, to say the least, is an unmitigated disaster for education in Africa' (Obasi 1995;175. My emphasis).**

Obasi argues that Structural Adjustment is, therefore, contrary to the United Nations sanctioned rights of everyone to free and compulsory primary education (Obasi 1995). The argument that the World Bank's Structural Adjustment policies do not encourage the United Nation's universal goals for primary education is an indictment of Structural Adjustment. The following section highlights the damaging effects of Structural Adjustment upon The Gambia's education system.

## 6.5 Structural Adjustment Effects upon Education in The Gambia

The implementation of Structural Adjustment in The Gambia in 1985 resulted in a decline in the number of primary teachers (which has recently only slightly improved under the new Government who still work with Structural Adjustment). The number of primary teachers should be increasing to facilitate the enrollment of primary aged children. However, since 1985 there has been an actual decline in the number of primary teachers.

**Table 6.1**

**Number of Gambian Primary Teachers (UNESCO 1994)**

1980	1985	1990
1,900	3,100	2,700

Between 1980 and 1985, just before the introduction of Structural Adjustment there was an 11% annual growth of primary teachers. In the five year period 1985-1990 immediately following the implementation of Structural Adjustment there was a 3.2% annual *decline* in the number of Gambian teachers. This was because of reduced public expenditure under the programme.

Secondly, Gambian primary average annual growth rate figures show a dramatic decline immediately after the implementation of Structural Adjustment in 1985.

**Table 6.2**

**Primary Enrollment; Average Annual Growth Rate (UNESCO 1994)**

1970-1980	1980-1985	1985-1990
10.2%	10%	1.9%

The rise in primary children's enrollment<sup>42</sup> made during the 1970's and 1980's has been eroded by Structural Adjustment. This decline is partly because of the poverty created by Structural Adjustment (Graham-Brown 1991; Obasi 1995). This poverty encourages parents to send their children out to work rather than to go to school (Gambia Community Survey Report 1994). In addition part of The Gambia's educational structural adjustment includes the introduction of User Cost Recovery Charges. These User Cost charges include the recently introduced Book Rental Scheme. Under the Book Rental Scheme children are charged on a termly basis for renting the required textbooks. If they do not pay the Book Rental Charge they do not get a book hence I saw of groups of six children sharing one class reading book.

Structural Adjustment User Cost charges encourage expensive middle and secondary school fees. Average school fees in Middle and Secondary schools are approximately D1000 per year. Average wages in The Gambia are

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<sup>42</sup> The decline in enrollment rates is regional. Whereas enrollment rates have continued to rise in urban areas they have declined in rural areas, where 72% of the population live (Poverty Alleviation Strategy Report; Ministry of Education 1994).

approximately D2000 per year and in real terms have been decreasing between 1973 and 1987 (The Republic of The Gambia Population Databank 1993;63). Hence Structural Adjustment appears to be exacerbating poverty making it less likely that families can afford those school fees. Hence one of the *effects* of educational Structural Adjustments is to *worsen* access to secondary education, particularly in rural areas where incomes are lower<sup>43</sup> (Obasi 1997).

## **6.6 The Gambia Education Policy (1988-2003): Raising Both Educational Access and Quality**

In order to fulfill the Gambia Education Policy (1988-2003) of improved access<sup>44</sup> and quality in education, thousands of extra qualified teachers are required (Gambia Teachers' Union 1997). Attempting to achieve *both* increased access and improved quality within a limited education budget is problematic. The Deputy Chief Education Officer told me that the Ministry of Education is

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<sup>43</sup> In 1847 the Education Committee of the Privy Council to the Colonial Office suggested that 'provision of education should be self-financing' (Ball 84;123). Ball writes that 'this was to have a considerable inhibiting effect, especially during periods of economic depression in the colonies' (Ball 84;123). There is an economic depression in The Gambia at present and current World Bank policies such as User Charges are limiting the enrollment of children. Obviously the socio-economic conditions of 1847 and 1996 are not directly comparable. Nevertheless the effects of the Colonial Office's 1847 recommendations and the World Bank's 1990's recommendations are similar.

<sup>44</sup> The aim is to increase the Gross Primary Enrolment from 59% to 75% by 2003 (Education Policy 1988-2003). The Primary Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) was 59% in 1995. The population growth rate of 4.1% is very high so that just to keep the current GER of 59% many new schools need to be built and teachers employed. For example Lamin primary school's enrolment has increased from 300 pupils to 1,600 pupils in 10 years. This anticipated rise in the number of school children necessitates the employment of more teachers. For a fuller discussion of increasing primary enrolment rates please see chapter six.

attempting to achieve the difficult equilibrium between increased access and improved quality. The General Secretary of The Gambia Teachers' Union stated that

'The rising number of children in school means that increased numbers of teachers are needed. **We need more qualified teachers** but Government says that it simply cannot afford to pay anymore teachers. Government cannot pay increased numbers of teachers. World Bank assistance is not in the area of teachers' salaries. Government needs more money to pay teachers and facilitate learning'. (Gambia Teachers' Union General Secretary, my emphasis).

The GTU rightly states that there is a need for more qualified teachers if The Gambia Education Policy goals of improved access and quality are to be achieved. However the problem is that World Bank financial assistance is not available for teachers' salaries hence the restructuring of teachers' working practices in form of the double shift which is discussed later in this chapter.

Adding to the problem of attempting to improve access and quality, The Gambian Government Policy (1988-2003) states that all unqualified teachers are to be phased out by 2003. One of the main objectives of phasing out all unqualified teachers is to improve the quality of education.

## **6.7 The Gambian Education Policy of Phasing out all Unqualified Teachers by 2003**

At the same time as wanting to increase the number of qualified teachers so that access and quality of primary education is enhanced, the Ministry wishes to cut the number of unqualified teachers. The Government optimistically aims to phase out all unqualified teachers by 2003. Historically the numbers of unqualified teachers in The Gambia has been high. At present only 55% of primary teachers in The Gambia are qualified<sup>45</sup> (Ministry of Education 1996).

The problem for the Ministry of Education is how to achieve the twin goals of phasing out unqualified teachers and training more qualified teachers with dwindling amounts of money. The Ministry of Education (and World Bank's) 'solution' to this funding 'problem' (which World Bank policies have helped to generate) is to *intensify* the use of existing qualified teachers. One of the World Bank's intensification policies is known as the 'double shift' because it literally doubles the qualified teachers' work. A letter circulated from the Ministry of Education (see Appendix Three) to explain why the double shift was being introduced stated

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<sup>45</sup> A higher percentage of teachers in urban areas are qualified.



'This (double shift system) is viewed to partially serve as an alternative to the supply of the unqualified teachers in the school system' (Regional Education Office, July 1996).

Thus the official reason for introducing the double shift was to phase out unqualified teachers. It is noticeable that there is no mention in the letter of the economic necessity for introducing the double shift.

### ***6.8 The Double Shift: Double the hours and Twice the number of children***

The double shift system doubles the hours a qualified teacher works and doubles the number of children he/she teaches. A double shift teacher teaches a class of 50 pupils from 8.30a.m to 1.30p.m. The same teacher then teaches a second cohort of 50 different children from 2.00p.m. to 6.00p.m. Teachers working the double shift have their teaching hours doubled from 4 hours a day to 8 hours a day and they teach approximately 100 children instead 50 children. For working the afternoon (and evening) double shift the teacher does not get paid double but rather half their normal pay. In other words, instead of receiving 200% of their basic salary for working the double shift they only receive 150%. Some of Lamin's qualified teachers have chosen to work the double shift whilst others have refused to work the double shift. At present it is voluntary for a teacher to teach the

double shift in Lamin School. The experiences of the teachers are discussed later in this chapter.

In the next section the significant economic benefits of raising the pupil:teacher ratio from the double shift system are examined.

### ***6.9 The Economic Savings of The Double Shift. Raising the Pupil:Teacher Ratio***

The World Bank is actively encouraging The Gambia to implement the double shift policy to save costs.

**'Double shift teaching can reduce average per pupil cost if the increase in the pupil-teacher ratio is greater than the increase in teacher's salaries'. (The World Bank 1988;48).**

Hence whilst enrollments increase, costs are contained because of the increasing pupil-teacher ratio. Thus 'average per pupil costs' are reduced and thereby financial savings are made<sup>46</sup>. In the following transcript with the Deputy Chief Education Officer, the World Bank's interest in raising the pupil:teacher ratio was paramount.

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<sup>46</sup> In addition by using existing trained teachers the Government does not have to train extra teachers thereby reducing the costs of teacher training.

**'The latest World Bank mission to The Gambia in November was interested in the double shift issue. The Gambian pupil:teacher ratio is not high enough according to the World Bank. It needs to rise from 1:45 to 1:50. World Bank is saying to increase pupil:teacher ratio to achieve maximum and effective use. Pupil:teacher ratio must rise..... World Bank also feels that double shift teaching is more cost effective than two teachers. This issue of double shift was based upon economic judgment. All teachers have to be utilised to their maximum cost-effectiveness.'** (Deputy Chief Education Officer, MOE. My emphasis).

According to the World Bank the average pupil:teacher ratio in Sub-Saharan Africa is 1:50 (World Bank 1988). The Gambia's pupil:teacher ratio at 1:45 is deemed too low by the World Bank economists and must rise. Thus the World Bank's economic interest in the double shift. The effects upon the quality of education delivered by raising the pupil:teacher ratio are not mentioned by the World Bank or are the effects of the double shift upon teachers. In the next section I examine how the Deputy Chief Education Officer and Gambia Teachers' Union (GTU) perceive the double shift.

#### ***6.10 'Quality is being Sacrificed to Increase Access' (GTU): The Educational Effects of Double Shift Teaching***

The General Secretary of The Gambia Teachers' Union unequivocally stated to me that:

**'Access and quality are very different. With double shift teaching, quality is being sacrificed to increase access'** (GTU, My emphasis).

Thus the World Bank/Ministry of Education double shift teaching is perceived by the GTU as increasing access at the expense of quality. As the following Ministry of Education official pointed out, working a double shift in hot and humid classrooms with limited resources *is* tiring and reduces the teachers' effectiveness of providing a quality learning environment.

**'This double shift is too tiring for teachers both morning and afternoon. Teachers are less tired and fresher in the morning hence there is a competition amongst parents for morning places'** (Deputy Chief Education Officer. My emphasis).

Parents are aware that their children will receive an inferior education if they are taught by a teacher who has already taught a class of fifty children. Double shift teaching places economic considerations before educational needs. Considering that the use of double shift teaching is a widespread policy throughout Africa it is surprising that there is little published research on the effects of double shift teaching upon teachers' work. According to Bray: (1990)

**'Although double-shift schooling has long been common in a wide range of countries and has important economic, pedagogical and social implications, it has been the focus of surprisingly little research.'** (Bray 1990;73)

Similarly London (1993) notes that although it is 'accepted' that double shift schooling is qualitatively inferior to single shift teaching there is a lack of evidence

to substantiate this assumption. Perhaps predictably World Bank (1988) research in neighboring Senegal stated that test scores of children in single shift classes and double shift classes were comparable. The Gambian Ministry of Education reiterated this research in support of double shift schooling. Bray (1990;80) concludes his economic discussion of the double shift system by ambiguously stating the following.

**'Some research has indicated that academic achievement in double shift schools may be just as high as in single shift schools. Thus although in most cases there would appear to be some trade-off between financial savings and educational quality, the educational costs of double shift schooling need not necessarily be high.'** (Bray 1990;80. My emphasis)

Bray states that in 'most cases' educational quality suffers when double shift schooling is introduced. What is clear is that more in-depth research upon the qualitative effects of double shift schooling is needed.

It is important to note that the implementation of the double shift policy contributes towards The Gambia's Educational Policy of improving access and reducing the number of unqualified teachers. In the next section I examine these beneficial effects of the double shift .

### **6.11 The Double Shift: (i) Increasing Access**

The main attractiveness of the double shift system is the possibility it offers the state to fulfill the United Nations human rights objectives of education for all (London 1993). For some children, within the present Gambian socio-economic conditions of a rapidly rising school age population and budgetary constraints, there is the harsh choice between the double shift system of schooling or no schooling at all. Thus as a Ministry of Education official pointed out to me double shift teaching does help to fulfill the Gambian Education Policy (1988-2003) goal of increased access.

**'Double shift teaching helps us to achieve our policy objectives regarding increasing access. That's why there will be a massive increase expansion of double shift in Brikama because of the exploding population rate. Using the double shift also gives the Government the chance to educate children whilst we construct new schools' (Deputy Chief Education Officer, MOE. My emphasis).**

If access to education is to be improved in Brikama, where Lamin school is located, the use of double shift teaching is now seen by the Ministry of Education as the best way forward regardless of the possibility of deteriorating quality. Since there is at present a physical shortage of school buildings to educate

Brikama's children, the double shift system is seen as the best interim solution until new schools have been constructed.

The second major benefit of the introduction of the double shift system is that it enables unqualified teachers to be phased out. The removal of unqualified teachers from Gambian education would be a major step forward in the professionalisation (see Chapter Four) of teaching.

#### ***6.12 (ii) Professionalisation of The Gambian teaching force by phasing out unqualified teachers***

A crucial aspect in the process of the teachers' professionalisation (see Chapter Four) is to ensure that all members of the profession are qualified (Grace 1987). Through the double shift process of intensifying qualified teachers' work it becomes possible to gradually replace unqualified teachers with qualified teachers. Thus in the case of Gambian double shift teaching a positive effect of the intensification of teachers' work is to further enhance their professionalisation. Mrs. Jawo, an experienced and qualified teacher (see Chapter Seven for an Overview of the Key Respondents), explained to me how she was asked if she wished to do the double shift:

'The Headmaster asked some teachers to continue until the evening. Then they selected us. Not all the teachers. It's only the experienced and qualified class teachers who were chosen

plus the Headmaster & his Deputy doing the double shift.'  
(Sunta Jawo).

Hence only Lamin school's qualified and experienced teachers were asked to work the double shift<sup>47</sup>. By working the double shift, Lamin's qualified teachers are increasing the gradual phasing out of unqualified teachers eventually ensuring that the profession is all qualified. It is important to note that Lamin's teachers were well aware of the reasons behind the intensification of their work. My findings are in agreement with Woods (1994) who argues that teachers understand and make sense of the restructuring of their work (see Chapter Five).

### ***6.13 Teachers' Knowledge of the Double Shift***

The teachers at Lamin school were knowledgeable concerning the processes and reasons for the intensification of their work. They were not passive victims unwittingly co-opted as agents of the state (Gewirtz 1996). The Master of Lamin school was unambiguous in his interpretation of the double shift,

'These changes to do with the double shift are for economic reasons and not educational needs. At present we have to accept such things' (Master, Lamin primary school).

Master knew that given the current financial conditions it was necessary that Lamin school worked the double shift policy. He was aware of the potentially

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<sup>47</sup> The greatest pressure for extra school places arises in the younger age groups. These younger age grades are predominately taught by female teachers. Hence the teachers who



damaging consequences of the double shift upon the quality of education. However at present he was resigned to the situation. Equally Mrs. Jawo (see Chapter Seven for an Overview of the Key Respondents), was aware of the need for the double shift.

**'There is a lack of qualified teachers, that is why they are doing this double shift. Instead of employing unqualified teachers they want to employ more qualified teachers. That's their aim. And because all the children cannot come in the morning'**  
(Mrs. Jawo. My emphasis)

Mrs. Jawo appreciated the Government policy of employing more qualified teachers. She was also aware of the fact that there was a lack of classrooms to accommodate the extra children who wanted to come to school in the urban areas. Thus Mrs. Jawo was familiar with the arguments concerning double shift teaching. Like Master, she accepted that the double shift was far from ideal but that at present it was necessary in The Gambia. However there was a range of diverse interpretations of the double shift in Lamin school. Some teachers were against its introduction and refused to work the double shift. Others were resigned to its introduction and even appreciated its short term benefits. The teachers' stories which I collected from Lamin Primary School, speak of the tensions, contradictions and dilemmas concerning the restructuring and intensification of their work.

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were working the double shift were predominately women. In other Brikama schools the use of the double shift was much more prevalent and as many men as women worked the double shift.

#### ***6.14 The Difficulties of Interviewing the Double Shift Teachers***

I agreed with the double shift teachers that lunch times would offer the best time for the interviews since they would have completed their morning shift and be waiting for the afternoon shift. I was surprised to learn that after eating their own lunch there was only half an hour left before the afternoon shift arrived. Nevertheless, as arranged I waited patiently under the mango tree to interview a double shift teacher between 1.30 pm. and 2.00 pm. Even in winter in the early afternoon it was very hot for me sitting under the shade of the mango tree and I was most uncomfortable. The heat made me sleepy and lethargic.

I waited on several occasions for different double shift teachers. They, however, did not appear. Upon leaving the school one hot afternoon frustrated that I had again not been able to interview a double shift teacher, I looked in on one of their classrooms. The teacher was asleep, slumped across her desk. Her colleague who lay across the children's desks was also sleeping. The heat and the long working day made them tired. In the absence of a staffroom, whilst they waited for the double shift children to arrive, they took advantage of their half hour to rest. I brought them tea and cakes for which they were most grateful. These small presents encouraged them to talk with me. Sometimes they were lying

down when I interviewed them which to an outside observer must have seemed a ridiculous situation. In the context, however, it was acceptable and was the only way I got to interview the double shift teachers. If they were not teaching they were resting.

The afternoon heat was equally difficult for me. I found observing the double shift teachers teaching in the afternoon hard work because I was tired. Not surprisingly the afternoon lessons which I observed were slow. Invariably the teacher delivered a 'chalk and talk' lesson with few visual aids. Nevertheless the teachers were teaching, and some learning was occurring. Exhausted I would leave the school at around half past three. I respected these teachers who were teaching approximately 50 children in temporary classrooms with no air conditioning or fans. At six o'clock when they finally finished teaching for the day, they would have taught for eight hours, 14 separate periods and approximately one hundred children.

Given the work load it was not surprising that some teachers who were asked to work the double shift refused to do so. In the following section I discuss some of the teachers' comments concerning the double shift.

### **6.15 Teachers' Who Refused to Work The Double Shift**

Mrs. Jammeh (see Chapter Seven for an Overview of the Key Respondents), was asked to work the double shift and refused. She told me that she could not teach 'effectively' in the morning and the afternoon and that she would be 'cheating' the Government, and the children.

G.P.R-H; What do you think of the double shift?

Mrs. Jammeh: I myself cannot do it. I was first approached if I could do it. I said no I can't. It's just too much work. I was the first lady to be consulted here. **I said it would not be fair to the children. I would not be able to teach *effectively both morning and afternoon*.** I was the first lady to be consulted. I told the Deputy Headmaster. I said I am sorry I can't do it. He said go away & think it over. I told him point blank that I can't do it. He said you are quite right, you are fair to yourself.

G.P.R-H: What do you mean?

Mrs. Jammeh: **I would not be able to do it because I would not be fair to the children & I would not be fair to myself. I cannot teach both in the morning & the afternoon correctly.** That's obvious. Well we are human beings and we do get tired. And sometimes you have problems with management of your class. You cannot teach 7 or 8 subjects each in the morning & the evening.

G.P. R-H; Do you have anything else to say?

Mrs. Jammeh: **I feel I would be cheating the Government, cheating the children and cheating myself. So I will not teach the double shift.'** (Mrs. Jammeh. My emphasis).

Mrs. Jammeh felt that the quality of her teaching would be compromised if she taught both morning and afternoon shifts. She was not prepared to be an ineffective teacher and hence declined the offer of working the double shift. The Deputy Headteacher agreed with her that working the double shift would compromise the quality of her teaching. Patriotically, Mrs. Jammeh did not wish to cheat the Government by working as an ineffective teacher. Mrs. Jammeh resisted the restructuring reforms using professional reasons of quality and teaching effectiveness which were framed within a patriotic discourse. I return to this issue of patriotism and the double shift later in this chapter.

On the basis of a reduction the quality of her teaching Mrs. Mansell also refused to work on the double shift.

G.P.R-H; Why don't you teach the double shift?

Mrs. Mansell: Because of money some people jump at it. But I don't think I could do it. **If I were to be honest I would not have the energy to teach in the morning & the afternoon, day in and day out.** If there is no way out I may take it up but I would not be doing my *duties* as I would want to. **If you want to be a good teacher as I do, you cannot teach effectively in the morning & effectively in the evening.** It's difficult setting, marking talking throughout.

G.P.R-H: What do you mean?

Mrs. Mansell: **You will simply do it to use the money to fill some gaps somewhere.** But the actual work would not be done effectively. **We teach 7 periods in the morning and then to do it the evening would be very tiring!** ( Mrs. Mansell. My emphasis).

Mrs. Mansell candidly admitted that working the double shift would be too tiring for her. In addition, like Mrs. Jammeh, Mrs. Mansell stated that her teaching would be ineffective in the afternoon. Hence on the grounds that working the double shift would reduce the quality of their work Mrs. Jammeh and Mrs. Mansell refused to work the double shift. 'Mama' Jammeh (a different Mrs. Jammeh) declined the offer of working the double shift on health grounds. She had had two miscarriages and was anxious that her latest pregnancy was successful. She was concerned that the extra work of the double shift might potentially lead to another miscarriage.

Thus for reasons of quality, effectiveness, tiredness and health, the teachers in this section refused to work the double shift. In the following section I examine the reasons of those teachers who had chosen to work the double shift. These teachers were primarily motivated by the extra pay.

#### ***6.16 Double Shift Teachers; The Motivation of the Improved Salary***

G.P. R-H; What do you think of the double shift?

Mrs. Jawo: 'It is very very difficult. It is not easy. I have 45 in the morning and 55 in the afternoon which is 100 children. I was thinking of leaving this Double Shift because it gives me a lot of problems. Yes, the job is very difficult. You start at 8.20 and go through until 6.00 pm. We work the whole day without any rest.

G.P. R-H: Why do you do it if it is so difficult?

Mrs. Jawo: **Just because of the little extra that they pay us. And as a responsible somebody who doesn't have enough money and a large family, we will put the extra money to our families. I have to meet the middle and high school fees which are very expensive. That's why we are suffering with this double shift business'**. (Mrs. Jawo. My emphasis).

Mrs. Jawo worked the double shift in order to use the extra salary to pay her children's school fees. To meet her family's needs she was prepared to sacrifice and suffer.

G.P.R-H; Why do you work the double shift?

Mrs. McIntre; **On this double shift they will pay us 50% extra of our basic salary. That makes me feel good and encourages me. It is better than going home and sitting down and doing nothing. If we were doing it free of charge we would not accept it. But this is the third month and we still haven't received any money from them yet. That's why I wanted to leave this afternoon because I haven't yet been paid. It is very very difficult, it is not easy at all to teach this double shift without pay.'**

(Mrs. McIntre. My emphasis).

Mrs. McIntre stated that without pay she would not work the double shift. The extra 50% was, however, enough to entice her to teach in the afternoon. When I interviewed her, however, Mrs. McIntre was furious that she had not been paid for the previous three months of double shift work. I learnt that over the Christmas holidays the double shift teachers finally received their extra salary, albeit three months late.

### **6.17 Teachers' Patriotic Ideologies Facilitated the Introduction of the Double Shift**

Mrs. Jawo and Mrs. Jallow cited nationalist reasons which encouraged them to work the double shift.

**'There are not enough classrooms for all the children now. There are so many coming to school and there is not enough room. So we have to teach them in the afternoon but it is difficult. But I have to help because these are the nation's children. All children must go to school and I feel I must help.'** (Mrs. Jawo. My emphasis).

In order help with the Gambian Education Policy of increasing access to school Mrs. Jawo felt that she must help by working the double shift. Mrs. Jawo had actively decided to work the double shift for financial and nationalist reasons. Mrs. Jawo was not a victim of structural adjustment packages. Rather she was actively managing and making sense of the restructuring of her work in her own terms. Similarly one of the reasons that Mrs. Faal had decided to work the double shift was to meet The Gambia's needs for qualified teachers.

**'We have a lack of qualified teachers. There is no extra money for new qualified teachers and so as experienced qualified teachers we are helping.'** (Mrs. Faal).

Like Mrs. Jawo, Mrs. Faal wanted to help the Gambian nation develop. Mrs. Faal cannot be interpreted as simply being oppressed by structural adjustment.



Rather Mrs. Jawo stated nationalist reasons for working the double shift. Mrs. Jawo wanted to help with the national crisis of insufficient qualified teachers. She was actively aware of why the structural reform was being carried out and as long as she got paid for working the double shift was prepared to work with the restructuring.

Jammeh's July 22nd Coup vigorously espoused national ideologies (see Chapters One, Seven Eight and Nine). This political rhetoric articulated and found resonance with teachers' patriotism. There was thus a close political alignment between the Government and the teachers. This connection between the Government and the teachers facilitated the implementation of the double shift restructuring reform. By working the double shift teachers' feelings of professional power in the development of *their* nation was strengthened.

#### ***6.18 Benefits of Working the Double Shift; Promotion; Reward in Heaven and Working with the Children***

Other than salary advantages and helping in national development, Mrs. McIntre, Mrs. Faal and Mrs. Jawo did see further benefits in working the double shift. Mrs. Faal described to me how she was pleased to work the double shift since it gave her the chance to see the progress of Grade one children she had taught last year. The children, who were now in Grade Two were in the afternoon school shift and Mrs. Faal was their teacher again.

**'I was working with the Grade Ones last year. Now I do the double shift & it is really nice to see them progress in the Grade 2 this year' (Mrs. Faal).**

Mrs. Faal already knew these children and hence would know their needs better than a teacher new to the children. Thus by working the double shift Mrs. McIntre was able to professionally fulfill her interest in the children she had taught last year.

Mrs. McIntre who, like all the other double shift teachers is a Muslim believed that her true reward for working the double shift would be in Heaven.

**'I will be rewarded for my hard work on this afternoon shift by Allah so that when I die I will go to heaven. I want to work hard so that God will reward me.'** (Mrs. McIntre).

Mrs. McIntre felt that the hard work she was putting into working the double shift would be rewarded by Allah giving her a place in Heaven. Once again it can be seen that culturally Mrs. McIntre was able to come to terms with working the double shift.

At the end of her first term working the double shift, Mrs. Jawo an experienced teacher felt that she was 'getting used' to working the double shift. Mrs. Jawo claimed that, despite the fatigue described earlier, the double shift was even

becoming a 'little bit' enjoyable. Thus the paradox of teaching, the fatigue and the enjoyment (Nias 1989) is apparent in this transcript.

**'The last month it was difficult for me but now I am trying and am enjoying it a little bit now. I think that I am coming to get used to it. I have been a hardworking teacher for twenty years. I have taught in hot and dry places with much malaria and so this afternoon shift is not tough for me because I have got the experience.'** (Mrs. Jawo. My emphasis).

Mrs. Jawo told me that she had worked in difficult places. This had given her the necessary experience to successfully work on the double shift. Hence at the end of the first term she was able to claim that working the double shift was no longer tough. Perhaps the thought of the double shift's three months wages being paid together over the Christmas holidays made the double shift a 'little bit enjoyable' for Mrs. Jawo.

### ***Conclusion***

The recent evidence seems to point towards structural adjustment's inability to 'adjust' poorer economies (Obasi 1997). Rather structural adjustment appears to maintain economic inequality by ensuring that poor countries' scarce resources are used in servicing the interest on World Bank loans. Structural adjustment has intensified Gambian teachers' work through the double shift which aims to reduce unit costs of education by raising the teacher:pupil ratio. In this chapter I

analysed Lamin teachers' contradictory feelings about the intensification of their work.

Both the teachers who accepted to work the double shift and those who resisted it, perceived themselves as 'patriotic and noble teachers'. Those teachers who agreed to work the double shift did so for financial rewards and to help the Gambia in its current educational goal of achieving access to education for all and to phase out unqualified teachers. However these teachers felt that working the double shift compromised their existing professional ideologies of *quality* teaching being central to the development of the Gambian nation. They were aware of the contradictions in their work of sacrificing quality for quantity.

To reductively interpret intensification restructuring policies as oppressive (Apple 1986) is to overlook the particularities of the wider political and social context in which the restructuring takes place. Stating that intensification of teacher's work *necessarily* leads to deprofessionalisation of teachers (Ozga 1995) omits the complexities and contradictions within teachers' cultures. It is the teachers' cultures who interpret and make sense of the restructuring. Thus in order to understand the effects of restructuring upon teachers, a grasp of both the national political context and the micro-political context of the teachers' cultures is required. In The Gambia at present there is an alignment between the nationalism of the new government and the nationalism within Gambian teachers' cultures. This current alliance between the macro and micro political cultures

facilitates the implementation of the double shift. The teachers who worked the double shift 'accommodated' (Woods 1994) the reform within their existing nationalist professional ideologies.

Research emphasises diverse teachers' cultures responding differently to intensification and restructuring of their work (Nias 1989; Mac an Ghail 1992; Woods 1994; Troman 1996). This research argues that if the restructuring of teachers' work 'fits' with teachers' pre-existing professional self-images then teachers are likely to accept, with reservations, the intensification of their work. If, however, the restructuring does not benefit teachers' professional sense of self then the restructuring is likely to be resisted. The restructuring of Gambian teachers' work has been 'packaged' in terms of national development and thus was more readily acceptable to the teachers. The teachers' voices testify that there was no unifying or essential experience of teaching as work which was common to all teachers. Rather there was a range of themes which teachers' had experienced in their work. Within these themes there was a wide range of interpretations and opinions.

## ***Chapter Seven:***

### ***Theoretical Approaches Towards Teachers' Lives and Careers***

#### ***Introduction***

This chapter begins with a brief discussion of the development of research on teachers' lives and careers. Studying teachers' lives and careers is a relatively recent phenomenon and the literature is predominately European and North American. This study aims to contribute to research which gives 'voice' to the perspective of teachers' lives and careers from other areas of the world.

I examine the structuralist approach towards teachers' careers of Wilensky (1960) and Lyons (1981). They perceived careers as hierarchical structures, routes and ladders up and through which people pass in an orderly fashion. I discuss how such an approach uses a single model of the career orientated teacher and how this approach tends to negate a teacher's personal life and its impact upon a career.

Sikes (1985), Huberman (1993) and Goodson (1992) advanced the literature by incorporating the subjective biographical accounts of teachers' experiences of 'having a career'. Sikes (1985) and Huberman (1993) inadvertently tended

towards a categorisation and normalisation<sup>48</sup> of teachers' lives and careers. This approach located teachers' lives and careers within categories and phases, however loosely structured. Such classifications and categories can, unintentionally, smooth over significant variations and differences between teachers' lives and careers. Gambian teachers' lives and careers are different and thus I examine theoretical approaches which allow for and encourage contextual difference and diversity between teachers' lives and careers (Ball 1996; Evetts 1990; 1994; 1996; Goodson 1992; 1995). Such theories respect both teachers' agency and the wider socio-economic conditions within which they work (Day 1993; Goodson 1995; Nias 1989; Kelchtermans 1993; Rhedding-Jones 1996). In this way we may then be able to understand's Gambian teachers' 'genealogies of context' (Goodson 1995;96).

At the end of the chapter I discuss the contribution of post-structural theory to our understanding of teachers' lives and careers. Post-structural theory allows for the non-rational, contradictory and ambiguous nature of a teachers' life and career. It is thus useful in that it adds further complexity to our understanding of a teachers' life and career.

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<sup>48</sup>Foucault (1991;196) argues that 'the power of the norm appears through the disciplines...the power of normalisation imposes homogeneity'. This disciplinary discourse of normalisation has the effect of measuring individual difference against a 'norm'. The norm thus demands homogeneity upon its subjects. Thus within the discourse of teachers' lives and careers, a norm, based upon life cycle stages and phases is sometimes attempted. This norm can inadvertently tend towards an exclusion of heterogeneity and diversity. This thesis focuses upon Gambian teachers' lives and careers, who by virtue of geographical location and material culture have different careers and lives from European teachers. Hence I wish to engage with theories which encourage diversity, difference and heterogeneity within teachers' lives and careers.

## ***7.1 A Brief History of Teacher Research***

Research on teachers' lives and careers is relatively recent and thus is 'underdeveloped' (Goodson 1992). Ball and Goodson (1985) identify the late 1960's as the period when the first studies of secondary school teachers' work was written which tended towards a pathologisation of the pupils (Hargreaves 1967, Lacey 1970). In the 1970's research examined how teachers labelled and failed pupils (Sharp and Green 1975, Ball 1981). In this approach, rather than blaming the pupils, the teachers were seen as the 'villians' (Ball and Goodson 1985).

In the late 1970's the research perspective changed to a macro-Marxist approach and the structural constraints within which teachers worked were emphasised. From this position the teachers were seen more sympathetically as 'victims' operating within structural constraints both within and outside the school (Sharp and Green 1975, Lacey 1977, Woods 1979). It was only in the 1980's that interactionist studies investigated teacher socialisation and the teaching process itself (Goodson 1983 and 1984). Interactionist studies paid greater attention to teachers as fully rounded human beings; surviving in the classroom and struggling to achieve careers (Lortie 1975, Ball & Goodson 1985,



Sikes 1985, Nias 1989, Huberman 1993). A recent development has been to emphasise *both* the wider historical, social and economic contextual understanding within which teachers' make their lives and careers *and* teachers' agency within their lives and careers (Nias 1989, Goodson 1992; Day 1993; Apple 1996; Hargreaves 1996).

## ***7.2 Structuralism's Theoretical Approach Towards Teachers' Lives and Careers***

In the structural approach a reductive analysis is produced in which the public career structure is reified so that personal aspects of a teacher's life are excluded. Structuralism tended to negate personal concerns which Nias (1989) found to be central to teachers' lives. The complexity of personal human experience is thus negated in favour of functional 'routes and structures' (Lyons 1981). By focusing upon structures this approach negates human diversity hence teachers are seen to have either a 'normal' or an 'abnormal' career.

Structuralism assumes that a 'good and normal' teaching career has continuous service and regular promotions to the top of the professional hierarchy (Wilensky 1960; Lyons 1981). Many teachers' careers do not follow such a linear career pattern and they are seen as 'lacking and abnormal', no matter how increasingly frequent those 'deficient' careers may be (Nias 1989; Evetts 1992). Structuralism tends to negate the complex relationship between

teachers' personal lives and teachers' professional careers. Hence male and female teachers who raise a family; move sideways in the profession; negotiate and compromise within dual career partnerships (Evetts 1996); are all seen as 'lacking and abnormal' from the structural analysis perspective.

### **7.3 Structuralism's Career 'Ladders, Maps and Routes'**

Wilensky (1960) emphasised the overtly structural aspects of careers; salary structures and scales with promotional ladders and frameworks. In this model of analysis, teachers' careers are perceived as being *determined* by such structural factors (Evetts 1994). For Wilensky careers are perceived as hierarchically arranged promotion structures through which teachers move up to posts of greater responsibility with higher pay. Such career structures can be organised nationally as in the case of teaching, which has a basic salary scale, incentive allowances, deputy headships and headships. In this approach teachers' subjectivities, their agency and diversity of career experience tends to be negated and structural issues emphasised.

Similarly, Lyons (1981) writing from an unacknowledged structuralist approach, lays stress upon the structural elements of teachers' careers. Spine points, ages, incremental levels and salaries all tend to be reified. Career structures are naturalised and concretised by the structural analysis approach. Lyons (1981) makes the analogy between the teaching system's structural elements

with that of a tree which has a large trunk moving upwards to its finer branches. The tree trunk is a metaphor for the 'lower' cadre of those involved in the teaching profession namely classroom teachers, whilst in the high, fine branches the management and inspectors are to be found. Such an approach to teachers' careers solidifies the structural elements as naturally and inevitably progressing up a hierarchy over a period of time. Lyons proceeds to give some advice to teachers who are at the level of the tree trunk concerning the possibility of teaching careers,

'The Chief Education Officer, the headteacher, and the HMI all started their careers as class teachers' (Lyons 1981;11).

Lyons assumes that teachers aspire upwards to achieve such positions and that with hard work, tenacity and a 'good career map' (Lyons 1981;112), this is not only possible but desirable.

Lyons has developed the concept of the career 'route' with a career map for his ubiquitous and ambitious career minded teacher.

'A good map takes note of the need to be built in sequential compartments, it will have a 'fast' timetable, and it will enable the teacher to acquire the relevant experience, qualifications and attitudes for each successive stage before the consideration of any move between stages' (Lyons 1981;112).

Lyons assumes that teachers are rational, promotion orientated and focused in their desire to move up the career 'tree'. The structural aspects of career 'stages' are focused upon further solidifying their existence. Teachers are expected to systematically and rigorously plan their careers as if in a competitive

race to the finish line. Lyons encourages teachers to make use of career 'timetables', 'benchmarks', and 'testing points' so as to measure their personal career development against their contemporary competitors. This model of aggressive teachers, each with their linear career map, competing against each other for the next stage in the hierarchy presents a reductive analysis of teachers' careers<sup>49</sup>. In the following section Bennet's (1985) art teachers' careers and Beynon's (1985) 'disillusioned' teachers challenge Lyons (1981) and Maclean's (1992) generalised career analysis.

#### **7.4 *Secondary school art teachers' careers and 'disillusioned' teachers***

Rather than generalising about all teachers' careers, Bennet (1985) focused upon a specific sub-set of teachers, that of art teachers. Hence Bennet was able to highlight the *different* career cultures that exist between distinct subject specialists. His research aimed to show the diversity of career aspirations which exist between different groups of teachers. Bennet (1985) found that with secondary school art teachers' careers,

'Income and prestige do not appear to be primary considerations. A few teachers had actually taken a drop in salary and or status in order to achieve a satisfactory work situation' (Bennet 1985;130).

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<sup>49</sup> It is interesting to note that such an abridged version of a teacher's career is found in Maclean (1992). He wrote that 'teachers move in patterned ways between competing positions' (1992;10). In Maclean's and Lyon's approaches it would seem that the strategically planned career competing teacher is dominant.

For Bennet's art teachers their 'sense of self'<sup>50</sup> (Nias 1989) would have been threatened by achieving high career status. These art teachers did not have Lyon's rational and competitive career 'maps and routes'.

Beynon's (1985) research illuminated those teachers who for various reasons had become disappointed and disillusioned with teaching. For example Mr. Pickwick, a history teacher,

'had developed his outside interests to such a degree (historical writing) that they had replaced teaching as his principal interest in terms of enthusiasm, commitment and time, so much so that teaching was no more than an irksome necessity to earn a living. His real career now lay elsewhere' (Beynon 1985;130).

Beynon labelled Mr. Pickwick's main career interest, which now lay outside teaching, as his 'concurrent' career. Several of Bennett's art teachers also instrumentally used teaching in a similar fashion and Bennett coined the term 'compensatory' career to describe their career aspirations. Mr. Pickwick's teaching career, which was 'an irksome necessity', disputes Lyon's or Maclean's generalised models of competitive career analysis. I now turn my attention to subjective careers research which stresses the teacher as an active agent in the creation of their career.

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<sup>50</sup> For Nias a teachers' 'sense of self' is highly complex. Nias works with the notions of a 'substantial self' and a 'situational self'. A teachers' 'substantial self' is an 'inner core' of 'unchanging beliefs and attitudes' about a teacher's work which is 'highly resistant to change' and is thus stable over time (Nias 1989:20). According to Nias a teacher does all they can to protect this 'substantial self'. In contrast a teachers' 'situational self' is relational and contextual. Jackson (1990), Hall (1996) and Britzman (1992) critique the notion of a fixed 'true' inner self arguing instead for multiple fluid and contextual 'identities'. I tend to agree with this post-structuralist critique. See sections 7.13 and 7.14 in this chapter.

## **7.5 Subjective Careers Research**

A significant development within teacher's career research has been the collection of biographic accounts of teachers' own career experiences (Ball and Goodson 1985, Day 1993). By focusing upon teachers' own actions and interpretations of their lives and careers, life history research powerfully positions teachers as active creators (Bogdan 1974). Subjective career research centres upon how teachers perceive and negotiate constraints and opportunities. It does not assume promotion or progress but rather works with themes which arise in discussion with the teachers (Evetts 1992). These themes which the teachers discuss may include both personal events and professional issues (Evetts 1992: Goodson 1993).

In the following sections I proceed to discuss and critique the important and core subjective career research of Sikes (1985) and Huberman (1993). The somewhat constraining phases and categories used do not allow for the contradictions, ambiguities and irrationality within a teacher's life and career.

## **7.6 Teacher's Age Related Career Stages**

Sikes (1985) examined secondary school teachers' experiences of the ageing process with 48 male and female, young and old teachers. Sikes generalised

about the position of a teacher's career within the promotion hierarchy at five distinct age related phases. Sikes attempt to 'fix' teachers' attitudes and feelings towards their work was during these discrete age related phases. The research was loosely based around Levison's (1979) life cycle and 'seasons of man' approach. This is a seminal and interesting life history study of the major phases through which teachers' careers pass.

This life cycle approach offers some worthwhile and stimulating *generalisations* about teachers' attitudes towards their work based upon their ages. Nias has some reservations concerning its use:

'In general the usefulness of either life-stage or life-age theories in providing a fuller understanding of teacher development awaits further enquiry' (Nias 1989;65).

Nias, whose work focuses upon primary school teachers, bases her critique of the life cycle approach upon the criteria which are used to judge one stage from another. The criteria for the different stages, she argues, are often ambiguous. However, Sikes makes universal and sweeping claims for the 'seasons of man' approach.

'...the model can accommodate differences of gender, race, occupation, culture, historical and geographical contexts etc' (Sikes 1995;29).

To suggest that a single model of teachers' lives and careers can accommodate such a vast and diverse array of human experience is problematic and dubious

Lives are too contextually specific, full of ambiguity and contradiction to suggest ubiquitous models (Goodson 1995).

Sikes notes that there appears to be:

'definite, identifiable phases of a teacher's career. These phases have not been rigidly defined in terms of age (Sikes 1985;29).

Although stating that these circumscribed phases are not specifically age related, Sikes' five phases *are* related to defined ages. Phase 1: 21-28 Age Group, Phase 2: 28-33 Age Group and so on. Sikes' analysis of teachers' lives and careers which is predominately based upon age related phases and categories, tends to assume a biological timetable. Such a timetable inadvertently serves to reify teaching career structures since she attempts to concretise a relationship between biologically determined ages and career phases.

### ***7.7 Age Phases Three and Four (Sikes 1985)***

During Phase Three, ages 30-40, Sikes determined that:

'It is usually during this period that the male teacher's career is established and that what is likely to be the terminal point is reached or at least comes into view....Women's experience can be quite different. Many will have chosen to make their occupational career secondary to their career as a wife and mother.' (Sikes 1985;45).



To suggest that at the age of 35 a man will know the limit of his teaching career can be deterministic and essentialised. Reaching a 'terminal point' assumes a rational linear progression up a career structure to a conscious career goal. By using the word 'usually' Sikes encourages the belief in a normal male career and expectations for this gendered age group. Suggesting career norms and standards for particular ages and genders, teachers themselves may come to believe that this is what they ought to have achieved in their careers. Thus this approach to careers can accidentally solidify the potentially structural issues of age and gender within the minds of teachers. Rather than accentuating difference and diversity within teachers' careers, focusing upon career norms may constrain and limit the potential agency and diversity of some teachers.

To propose that 'many women' within this age group have placed being a wife and a mother before their career perhaps demonstrates that this research was conducted in the early 1980's. Sikes' research approach focuses upon making broad generalisations rather than examining difference and diversity, for example, mothers who are teachers. Generalisations based upon gender may limit and constrain the potential of female teachers' lived realities especially those female teachers who choose to pursue a career *and* raise a family.

During Sikes' fourth biological Age Phase of 40-50 the central concern of career builders is 'coming to terms with one's own mortality' and 'with reaching a plateau in the life career' (Sikes 1985;50). Sikes has evidence to show that

this preoccupation with death is undoubtedly true for *some* teachers within this age group. However depending upon an individual teacher's life experiences being concerned with mortality may occur in other phases. In addition there may be other teachers with this age phase who do not see their career as having 'reached a plateau'. Teachers' attitudes and feelings, as with pupils, can often be context bound, ambiguous and contradictory (Roberts-Holmes 1993).

Hence the full context, often highly complex, concerning an individual teachers' attitudes and feelings towards their career needs to be known before generalised assumptions can be extrapolated to include other teachers' careers. Attempting to fix and determine the attitudes of teachers to a particular age group does not sufficiently do justice and equity to the diversity, contradiction and ambiguity found within teachers of this age group. I now examine Huberman's (1993) investigation which forms a significant body of research.

### ***7.8 Teachers Seven Career Phases (Huberman 1993)***

Huberman's (1993) examined one hundred and sixty Swiss secondary school teachers of different ages and genders. Huberman hypothesised that Swiss secondary school teachers' careers occupy seven main phases which he further broke down into career phase subsets. The teachers were then:

'...asked to plot themes in their lives sequentially into a series of steps, stages or phases that would capture the flow of their professional experience' (1993;32).

These phases included entry, stabilisation, experimentation, re-assessment, serenity, conservatism and disengagement (Huberman 1993;32). Inevitably, because this research is a mass phenomena study with a very large body of data, it tends towards categorisations and generalisations.

'What we gain in generality is lost in the particularities that have been- often inappropriately-lumped together.....We are thus at a median level of generalisation somewhere between a shapeless mass of unique cases and a large questionable aggregation' (Huberman 1993;20).

Huberman accedes that because the research is a large study it is difficult to explore the subtleties, contradictions and complexities of teachers' lives and careers. Thus although acknowledging that the research cannot allow for the singular and individual character of teachers' careers, Huberman does not question the research's methodological assumptions or methods. Rather he 'inappropriately lumps together' diverse and different teachers' careers.

Huberman's research is deliberately restricted to exclude collection of data outside the classroom:

'We have chosen, in fact, to limit further our investigation of the professional career by fixing our attention on secondary school teaching.....this comes down to a study of the pedagogical

career.....rather than obliging us to study individuals' *lives* more generally' (Huberman 1993;4).

A significant body of literature suggests that careers and lives *are* connected and interdependent (Ball and Goodson 1985, Sikes 1985, Beynon 1985, Evetts 1990,1994, Day 1993). Goodson et al argue that contextualised professional *and* personal lives are highly significant in helping us to understand professional careers. We need to know the *genealogy of context* (Goodson 1995;96) of the teacher to understand their life and career. A teacher's 'genealogy of context' requires us to study the totality of a teacher's professional *and* personal life. Hence confining teachers' careers to the classroom is limiting and problematic.

Hence by focusing upon a classroom 'pedagogic career', Huberman abandons and neglects both the multiplicity of macro political circumstances within which a teaching career is made *and* the personal, serendipitous micro political events which impinge upon and create teachers' careers. Huberman notes that careers do contain 'psychological and sociological variables' which are 'important' (Huberman 1993;4). However although stating that such variables *are* significant there is little elaboration or discussion of how 'sociological variables' affect teachers' lives and careers.

Huberman's analysis is subtle and perceives teachers' careers as being processual (Huberman 1993;4).

'While we have not set forth a linear or monolithic model of the career cycle (i.e. all teachers traversing each phase in succession) we have evoked *central tendencies* at general junctures, notably with respect to the leitmotives of different phases and the ordering of these phases' (Huberman 1993;12).

Huberman has loosened and blurred the fixed frames and edges of linear phases within career cycles. He observes that each 'phase' has a 'supple and suggestive status' (Huberman 1993;17). He stresses that not *all* teachers pass through each of the seven phases in an orderly manner and that the phases are incomplete, 'highly speculative' and may be 'delusive' (Huberman 1993;4). Hence Huberman's malleable phases encourage fluidity and movement within and between career phases. Huberman does, however, retain the 'phase' as the central organising principle in his research the main task of which is 'refining' those phases (Huberman 1993;13).

Huberman's analysis is limited because phases, however loosely structured, encourage normalisation and standardisation of teachers' careers and hence inadvertently serve to nullify the diversity and difference of teachers' lives and careers<sup>51</sup>.

Sikes (1985) and Huberman (1993) tend towards a description of stability within phases and do not discuss how a teacher moves from one phase to the next (Nias 1989, Kelchtermans 1993; Evetts 1996). The development of the notion

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<sup>51</sup> Huberman acknowledges this because he states that 'the diverse and discontinuous nature of teachers' lives and careers are often unexplainable using the tools at our disposal' (Huberman 1993:264).

of 'critical incidents' (Measor 1985), 'learning moments' (Day 1993), and 'landmarks' (Kompf 1993) are crucial in that they provide us with an understanding of the processes of *change* in a teachers' life and career.

### **7.9 Processes of Change and Critical Incidents in Teachers' Lives and Careers**

The concepts of change and development are central in understanding teachers' lives and careers. Evetts (1994) focuses upon themes arising from the teachers and the processes of change within careers.

'If the process of change in career patterns is in the forefront of researchers' minds, then it becomes easier to avoid the problem of overdeterminism by career structures' (Evetts 1994;24).

By focusing upon processes of change in career analysis, career structure reification may be prevented. Hence a discussion of 'critical incidents', which may be central in predicating change, is important (Measor 1985). Critical incidents are identified as being,

'key events in an individuals life and around which pivotal decisions revolve. They provoke the individual into selecting particular kinds of actions which lead in particular directions' (Measor 1985; 61).

The concept of the 'critical incident' introduces the possibilities of change and movement within a teacher's career. This is significant since the concept of 'critical incident' can potentially empower a teacher with respect to their career

agency. Moreover critical incidents can have a 'far reaching effect upon teachers' careers' hence teachers' biographies should examine a teacher's critical incidents (Measor 1985;61).

Measor identifies three different types of critical incidents; intrinsic, personal and extrinsic (Measor 1985; 62). These three types of critical incidents are a useful theoretical tool for analysing teachers' careers. Extrinsic critical incidents refer to the wider macro political, socio- economic changes that impinge upon a teachers' career. I examine these in the next section. The intrinsic critical incident refers to those significant events which occur within a teacher's classroom and may effect his or her career. The third type of critical incident, 'personal' types, relates to family events such as marriage, divorce, illness, the birth of a child, negotiating ones career with a partner and so on.

### ***7.10 The Wider Context of Teachers' Lives and Careers: Extrinsic Critical Incidents***

Driffield (1983), Ball and Goodson (1985), and Goodson (1995) stress the importance of the wider political, social and economic contexts within which teachers' lives and careers are made. Specific 'historical moments', or extrinsic critical incidents, are turning points in a teacher's life and career (Ball and Goodson 1985). For many Gambian teachers' the July 22nd Coup was an 'historical moment' in their life and career experience.

Bogdan (1974) lays stress upon the historical context within which teachers' lives and careers are made. He states that:

'.....to see an individual in relation to the *history* of his/her time and how she/he is influenced by the various religious, social, psychological and economic currents present in his/her world. It permits us to view the intersection of the life history of men/women with the *history* of society, thereby enabling us to understand better the choices, contingencies and options open to the individual' (Bogdan 1974;4 in Driffield 1983;139, my italics).

Life history research Bogdan claims lays emphasis upon the changing historical context of the society within which teachers make their lives and careers. Ball and Goodson (1985) and Goodson (1995) lend support to this historical contextualising of teachers' lives and careers but add that the political and economic context is critical. Goodson (1995) states that an understanding of the *contemporary* position of teachers requires that an historical understanding of the political economy is needed. In order to situate contemporary issues of teachers' careers and professionalism, Ball and Goodson (1985) describe the UK national political economic context of the 1960's and 1970's. Goodson (1995) argues for the centrality of the political context within which a teachers' life and career is made.

'It would be unfortunate if, in studying teachers' stories, we ignored these contextual parameters which so substantially impinge upon and constantly restrict the teacher's life ... In my view, teachers' stories should, where possible, provide not only a *narrative of action* but also a history of *genealogy of context*' (Goodson 1995;96).



Goodson's 'genealogy of context' requires that teachers' lives and careers are situated within an all embracing historical, political, socio-economic analysis.

For Goodson the place of teachers' stories are central in resisting structures of power but by themselves are not sufficient. Telling an *individual* teacher's story without a proper contextual analysis may only serve to reinscribe traditional power structures (Goodson 1995;96). What is needed, Goodson argues, is *both* stories of resistance set within a complete analysis of the wider historical, political, socio-economic contexts. Hence Goodson's narrative of action *and* genealogies of context. Thus to understand *contemporary* Gambian teachers' stories I examine how historically Gambian teachers' agency has been informed by wider politico-socio-economic contexts. I examine the complex interrelationship between agency and structure (Giddens 1981)<sup>52</sup> and 'stories of action and genealogies of context' (Goodson1995).

Through analysing a context of change it is possible to see the interaction and the dependency that both the macro political structures and the micro actions have. For example it is possible to examine the connections, negotiations and linkages between macro context actors, such as, politicians and trades union officials who may be redefining promotion ladders and the micro actors, the

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<sup>52</sup> Giddens usefully analyses the concepts of career structure and career agency as being 'fundamentally recursive' (Giddens 1981; 173). In this theory of career analysis, teachers are given agency which acts upon and changes career structures. In turn career structures act upon and change teachers' careers. Hence in this model structure and action together form the single entity of a shared duality. That is, they interact and continually inform each other as if in a symbiotic relationship. Giddens terms this relationship 'structuration' in order to express the mutual dependency, rather than opposition, of human agency and career structure.

individuals, who come to experience those changes (Evetts 1994). Hence by examining the process of change the career structure itself may be seen to be dynamic and therefore may be demystified by the actors themselves. The thesis portrays the complex interrelationships between the micro political stories of Gambian teachers action, the meso context of Gambian politics and the macro political context of the international restructuring of Gambian teachers' work.

In the following section I examine the importance of understanding the impact of a teachers' personal life upon their professional teaching career.

### ***7.11 Personal Critical Incidents***

Personal critical incidents can have a major impact upon a teacher's career.

Evetts's research showed:

'...the connections between formal careers and private lives and how each is embedded in the other' (Evetts 1996;43).

Hence for Evetts there is little distinction between a teacher's personal life and their public career. The two are closely connected and related. Feminist and post-structuralist research has generally highlighted the interrelationship and connections between personal life and the public career (Personal Narratives Group 1989, Kelchtermans 1993, Goodson 1995, Evetts 1990,1994,1996, Deem 1996). This thesis is concerned with the interaction between extrinsic and intrinsic critical incidents in Gambian teachers' lives.

Nias (1989) carried out research over a period of ten years with equal numbers of male and female primary school teachers. Their careers were 'dominated and determined by personal concerns' (Nias 1989;78). By demonstrating the centrality of a teacher's 'sense of self' which may either be affirmed or denied by personal 'reference groups'<sup>53</sup> in and out of school, Nias lends unequivocal support to the argument that male and female teachers' personal critical incidents play a crucial role in their careers.

Differences within teachers' lives and careers may be predicated upon *personal* diversity of gender, sexuality, ethnicity and age experiences. Such personal differences have traditionally been marginalised in teacher career research (Ball 1987, Troyna 1994, Bloom and Munro 1995, Evetts 1996). In the following section I review the literature which focuses upon women primary teachers' careers.

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<sup>53</sup> Teachers' 'reference groups', both within and outside of school, are comprised of like minded people, who share similar values and offer referential support to a teacher's 'substantial self' (see Footnote 3) (Nias 1989). Thus reference groups confirm and provide 'self-protection' to a teacher's 'substantial self'. Reference groups determine what information teachers receive and the interpretations they place upon it and shape teachers' responses to experiences. Nias emphasises the importance of talk in sustaining and creating reference groups (Nias 1989).

### **7.12 Female Primary Teachers' Careers**

Until recently female teachers' careers have been either ignored or stereotypically approached (Acker 1989). Recent literature notes that female teachers' careers are different from male teachers' careers (Acker 1989; Skelton and Hanson 1989; Lacey 1977; Evetts 1989; Aspinwall and Drummond 1989; De Lyon and Migniulo 1989). Indeed teaching has been described as a profession 'divided' by gender (Acker 1989; Lacey 1977). In the U.K. 81% of primary school teachers are women however 51% of primary school management are men (Evetts 1994). Women are concentrated in lower scale-posts, mostly teaching younger nursery and infant children whilst the men are predominately located in senior managerial positions teaching older primary children (Evetts 1989;1994; Acker 1989). This inequality of career opportunities has led to primary schools being described as 'pedagogical harems', in which a male headteacher has a staff of female classroom teachers (Ball 1987;1995). It is argued that this situation has arisen as a result of the patriarchal sexist culture which permeates the daily practices of the school (Ball 1987; Acker 1989; Evetts 1989).

'A discriminatory system continues when it is underpinned by powerful ideologies. Most prominent are the beliefs that tightly tie together women with marriage and children and the complementary beliefs about men's role as breadwinners' (Acker 1989;15).

Ideologies concerning women as 'natural' educators of young children sustains 'the internal labour market of teaching' (Evetts 1989). Evetts argues that sexist culture has powerful *positive* effects for men and equally powerful *negative* effects for female teachers' careers. For men, marriage and fatherhood do not contradict and compete with a teaching career (Evetts 1996). Marriage and fatherhood may add to common sense notions of the respectable male teacher. Women, however, have to negotiate the powerful constraining discourses of motherhood and the stereotypes of femininity (Evetts 1996).

These powerful controlling discourses are increasingly being resisted by women. Evidence from the labour market shows that women are choosing not to have families or have *both* a family and a career (Evetts 1996). Evetts conceptualised the 'dual focus career' in which both partners accommodate and negotiate with each others career aspirations and child rearing.

Post-structuralist theory<sup>54</sup> (Weedon 1987; Haw 1995) embraces notions of difference, such as women teachers' careers, hence in the following sections I examine the contribution of post-structuralist theories to the study of teachers' lives and careers.

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<sup>54</sup> There is no clear definition of post-structuralism since it is a term applied to 'a very loosely connected set of ideas about meaning (Kenway et al 1994). Post-structuralism rejects structuralism's absolute certainties' (Davies 1997). Hence within post-structuralism there is no absolute meta-narrative or single truth waiting to be discovered but rather constructed multiple and contesting truths which are not fixed.

### ***7.13 'Complex and Irrational' Teachers' Lives and Careers within Post-structuralist Theories***

Rather than seeking generalisable similarities between teachers' lives and careers, post-structuralist research encourages the analysis of diversity and difference in teachers' lives and careers (Evetts 1996). Since I wish to engage with an approach that encourages difference and diversity it can be seen that post-structuralist theoretical approaches have major implications for the thesis' methodologies and methods.

A post-structuralist approach allows for complex, confused, contradictory and fragmented teachers' lives and careers. Hence teachers' lives and careers do not need to be sorted and categorised into neat phases.

'It is important to emphasise that the career as outlined here is neither a unified entity nor a series of carefully planned, rational, measured steps. What has occurred has been frequently contingent, rarely linear, sometimes accidental and often serendipitous.....thinking of careers as orderly and rational does not always help us to understand the complexities of lives' (Deem 1996;14)

In this post-structuralist analysis, 'having a career' has been far removed from the rational, linear and planned experience described by structuralists such as Lyons (1981). Rather Deem's teaching career has been contingent, contradictory and complex. Thus in my research I was not constrained by attempting to identify phases and ages through which Gambian teachers passed.

#### ***7.14 Post-structuralist 'non-unitary subjectivities'<sup>55</sup> allows for a teacher's life and career to be contradictory***

Post-structuralist writers question the logic of a 'unified self' which negates from itself all conflict, contradiction and ambiguity (Moi 1985;8 in Bloom and Munro 1995;100). Rather a person's multiple subjectivities are perceived as being 'always active and in the process of production' (Bloom and Munro 1995;108). The theoretical understanding of multiple, fragmented and contradictory subjectivities allow teachers' lives and careers to be 'messy', incoherent and illogical. In my fieldwork I attempted to locate contradictions since contradiction is reflective of the complexity of Gambian teachers' lives and careers.

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<sup>55</sup> Structuralism proposed that there was a basic primary core element in the being of the self which was stable and unchanging over time (Haw 1995; Weedon 1987; Davies 1997). Post-structuralists however speak of a much more fluid and dynamic self or subject which is dependent upon the discursive field.

'Against this irreducible humanist essence of subjectivity, post-structuralism proposes a subjectivity which is precarious, contradictory and in process, constantly being constituted in discourse each time we think and speak' (Weedon 1987;32).

In post-structuralism rather than one self there are many sometimes contradictory selves known as 'non unitary subjectivities'. These multiple selves are constituted as discursive processes, rather than as unique, relatively fixed personal creations. It is this dynamism of the self and its possibility for change, even if limited by powerful restraining discourses (Foucault 1978) which makes post-structuralism attractive.

Post-structuralist theory moves teacher career research away from notions of fixed subjectivities occupying named phases and boundaries. In preference to stability within teachers' careers, a post-structural approach stresses change and hybridity and in-between-ness (Maclure 1996;273). Rather than seeking to resolve dilemmas and contradictions within teachers' lives and careers such issues are embraced.

### ***Conclusion***

This thesis examines teachers' lives and careers in a different context than that of Europe and North America in which much of the core literature in this chapter is located. Hence I have engaged with that literature which has emphasised the importance of the political and historical context within which teachers' lives and careers are made (Apple 1996; Ball and Goodson 1985; Day 1993; Hargreaves 1996). Through a process of acknowledging *both* teachers' agency and the wider extrinsic and personal constraints within which they live their lives, we may begin to unravel teachers' multiple 'genealogies of context' (Goodson 1995). Through its notion of fragmented and 'non-unitary subjectivities', post-structuralism allows us to see the ways in which a teacher may occupy *contradictory* 'narratives of action' (Goodson 1995).



## **Chapter Eight:**

### ***Teachers' Professionalism and the Contradictory Processes of Teachers' Professionalisation***

#### ***Introduction***

In order to answer my main research question (see Chapter One) I needed to work towards an understanding of what it was like 'to be' a Gambian teacher (Nias 1989). 'To be' a Gambian teacher involved acting in 'a professional manner' (see Chapter Eight). A teacher's professional 'sense of self' is an important aspect of a teacher's identity (Nias 1989;1991). Hence this chapter discusses the concept of teacher professionalism and the process of teacher professionalisation. These terms are subject to 'geographical and cultural differences in interpretation' (Helsby 1995). There is a dearth of theory concerning West African teachers' notions of professionalism and it is hoped this thesis, may in part, meet this need.

Teachers' professionalism is an ambiguous and contested term (Goodson and Hargreaves 1996). I understand a teacher's professionalism to mean a focus on the quality of a teacher's professional *practice* (Hoyle 1980). A teacher is acting professionally if they have exceptional standards of dedication, commitment and a strong service ethic (Helsby 1995; Talbert & McLaughlin 1996). Sockett (1993) and Fenstermacher (1990) emphasise the moral aspects of a teachers' professionalism. The term 'professionalisation' refers to the self interest of the teaching occupation in terms of its status, autonomy and conditions of work

(Helsby 1995). Helsby (1995) notes that the altruistic behaviour necessitated in being a 'professional' is not always compatible with the self interest of 'professionalisation'.

Whilst acknowledging that teachers are active agents it is important to note that teachers are constituted as subjects within particular socio-political and historical contexts (Robertson 1996). The context within which teachers professionalism is constituted is continually changing. Hence it is imperative in any discussion of teachers professionalism to articulate the wider socio-historical and political context within which their professionalism is constructed. Such knowledge assists understanding as to why teachers professionalism has been an 'historically precarious project' (Hargreaves and Goodson 1996;1).

### ***8.1 An historical overview of teacher professionalism***

Grace (1987), Dale (1989) and Ozga (1995) argue that the notion of teachers professionalism has been historically dependent upon the relationship between the teachers and the state. Dale (1989), Grace (1987) and Ball (1990) argue that an understanding of the present debates and arguments concerning teacher professionalism rests upon knowledge of the historical development of teachers in the Nineteenth century. Ball (199) and Grace (1987) argue that teachers were required by the state to control and discipline the urban working class. This control discourse, it is contended, was encouraged by portraying the working class as pathological and therefore needing the help of state workers such as teachers. The teachers it is argued were imbued with a missionary ideology to morally guide and educate the urban working class. This missionary ideology of altruism was developed by the state into professionalism which the state would

grant to teachers for their loyal service in maintaining the status quo (Grace 1987). Ozga (1995) argues that this concept of teacher professionalism is a form of occupational control which has been recently strengthened.

'The teachers of the people' (Grace 1978) were predominately drawn from the aspiring working classes. In addition primary teachers were predominately female. Apple (1986) argues that this Nineteenth century legacy remains within primary school teaching. It is argued that as a body of state workers, primary teachers who are largely female and working/middle class have been particularly prone to state control. The historical gender and class location of teachers is, according to Apple (1986), Dale (1989) and Ozga (1995) one of the reasons why the professional status of teaching has remained ambiguous.

Robertson (1996), contends that during the 1970's the state granted upon teachers a notion of the legitimated state professional. I analyse some of the complex conditions of the late 1970s when economies shifted from a Fordist economy to a post-Fordist economy. This economic shift had profound effects upon the state. In turn the relationship between the state and the teachers dramatically changed. Teachers uncertain professional status was questioned at this historical juncture leading to a plethora of state disciplining of teachers culminating in the 1988 Education Reform Act (ERA). Teachers work was reconstructed and the 'new' teaching professional was moulded around notions of the market, managerialism, outcomes, and performance indicators.

Current literature on the reconstruction of teachers work is divided as to whether a process of professionalisation or proletarianisation is occurring. Apple (1989), Ozga (1995) and Robertson (1996) argue that the reconstruction of teachers

work is a deskilling process. They contend that teachers work has intensified and that the state has appropriated their professional autonomy. Woods (1994), Mac an Ghail (1992) Helsby (1996) and Troman (1996) contest that within the specifics of a micro-political context such as a primary school or a department that the reconstruction of teachers work has highly contradictory effects. Teachers work they argue is being both upskilled and reprofessionalised in specific contexts when the 'new' professionalism fits with teachers sense of self and ideology. On the other hand certain effects, such as the lack of collegiality due to increased competition, deprofessionalises teachers (Ball 1996).

Hence at the end of the century we are presented with a confused and contradictory picture of starkly contrasting views of the historical project of teachers professionalism. By understanding the 'the policy contexts' (Goodson and Hargreaves 1996) within which teachers' professionalism is constructed it is possible to better appreciate 'teachers' own roles' in shaping their professionalism (Helsby 1995). Helsby contends that 'notions of 'professionalisation' and 'proletarianisation' are too simplistic' since they do not take into account teachers' own actions and understandings of their work.

## ***8.2 Teachers Imbibed with 'Missionary' Ideology***

The 'teachers of the people' were working class themselves and had to be monitorial teachers before they went to Teacher Training College. Grace argues that at teacher training college the teachers were imbibed with a missionary ideology and their instruction given in religious rhetoric. At College the teachers were presented with a missionary ideology which justified their work. Teachers

were encouraged to see themselves as agents of cultural enrichment providing civilising morals and basic education for working class enlightenment.

'Teachers were to be social and cultural missionaries- a kind of secular priesthood dedicated to the work of 'civilisation'..... Shuttleworth and the Inspectorate in early Victorian England legitimised a missionary ideology for teachers by presenting a picture of demoralised and disorganised working-class life, attributable in the main to the personal failings of the class, rather than as a consequence of the social and economic structure.' (Grace 1978;11).

As 'secular priests' the teachers had to be morally upright themselves and hence, in a similar way to missionaries, were trained in Christian morals and values<sup>56</sup>. The Teacher Training Colleges were run along similar lines as seminaries. For James Kay Shuttleworth the teachers were 'pioneers of civilisation' amongst the urban working classes. The teachers were given a missionary zeal and commitment to uplift the morally depraved and helpless from amongst the working class. It is significant that it was the working class themselves who were considered as pathological and therefore creating their own problems rather than the social and political circumstances that gave rise to working class poverty.

Ball & Goodson (85;22) and Mac An Ghail (1994) contend that the missionary ideology of serving the public from a sense of altruism and for the good of others, rather than of self serving interests is prevalent today. Ozga (1995) lends support to this thesis by stating that:

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<sup>56</sup>For some teachers being trained as a missionary was more than just a metaphor. Before being sent to the colonies as missionary teachers, some teachers practised their missionary skills upon the working class of London's East End (Ball 1990).

'Some residual elements of historical models of professionalism remain and inform the conduct of the modern professional: for example altruism or community interest' (Ozga 1995;23).

It is important to note that the potential of professionalism did not replace the missionary ideology but was simply a modern development upon it<sup>57</sup>.

It is interesting to note that Hargreaves and Goodson (1996) actively support some aspects of the present day 'missionary' ideology. Their postmodern professionalism is against self-serving status enhancement and embrace, amongst other criteria, 'moral and social purposes' and a 'commitment to care'.

### ***8.3 The Class and Gender of Primary Teachers and its Effects upon Teachers' Professionalisation***

Concerning the ambiguous status of the teaching profession Apple (1989), Acker (1989) and Ozga (1980) highlight gender as an important issue. Theoretically discourses of class and gender (and 'race') are intertwined and overlap and hence cannot be separated (Hawe 1995). Historically primary school teaching, with its emphasis on caring for the well-being of young children, has been constructed as a feminine profession. The macro context of schooling is patriarchal capitalism. One of the effects of patriarchal capitalism is the attempted control of women's labour (Acker 1989). Hence state bureaucratic control over female teachers and the teaching profession generally. The project of professionalisation has historically been used by female teachers as a means of resistance against the disciplinary effects of patriarchal capitalism. Female teachers, through the discourse of professionalism have been successfully able

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<sup>57</sup> Sockett (1993) presently espouses the 'secular priesthood ideology' of teaching hence it can be seen that it is still a pervasive ideology within teaching.

to win equal treatment, pay, and control (Apple 1986).

A central concern with the establishment of state elementary education was for purposes of social control, hence it was critical that teachers were encouraged to identify their interests as belonging to the maintenance of the status quo (Ball 1990). 'The teachers of the people' were however drawn from working class themselves and hence were aware of the structural conditions of the working class (Grace 1978;13). There were political concerns that if teachers identified with their working class origins and students, they might politicise the students into politically attempting to change structural conditions<sup>58</sup>.

Grace argues that the developing nineteenth century state had to offer teachers the potential for social advancement and respectability which would appease the teachers and prevent them from building class alliances with their students. Ozga (1981;47) lends support to Grace's thesis that teachers were offered the opportunity of professionalism in order to control 'the radical and extended actions of teachers'.

'These early aspirations for respectability and advancement were to find their expression subsequently in the language of professionalism..... Professionalism became the modern version of the 'missionary' ideology' (Grace1978;15).

An aspect of the 'language of professionalism' is that being professional and middle class is a synonym (Abercombie et al 1984). Hence the missionary ideology of the nineteenth century was gradually developed into a middle class

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<sup>58</sup> To the dismay of the Government, some of the newly established local Boards of Education were controlled by socialists and communists (Ball 1990).

professional ideology. The lure of respectable professionalism ensured that 'the teachers of the people' politically identified with their developing middle class contemporaries.

However some argue that teaching has never been accepted as a full profession but only as a 'semi-profession' (Nixon 1995). Lortie (1975), Ozga (1988), Apple (1985) and Robertson (1996) note that the traditional working class status of teachers is one of the central issues as to why society's acceptance of teaching as a full profession is problematic. They note that teachers class position is ambiguous and contradictory:

'located simultaneously in two classes. Thus they share the interests of both petty bourgeoisie and the working class' (Apple 1985;100).

However Ozga (1988) and Robertson (1996) argue that teaching as an occupation has been successfully used by the working class for the purposes of social mobility through to the middle class.

'teaching traditionally attracted fractions of the upper working and lower middle classes in what has been an important avenue for social mobility' (Robertson 1996;35).

Teachers using the occupation of teaching for their own social advancement is critical for understanding teachers shifting class alliances (Ozga 1988). The possibility of being a middle class state legitimated *de-politicised* professional was offered to teachers (Grace 1987). I examine the progressive period of the 1960s and the 1970s in which the conjuncture of political, economic and social forces allowed for some measure of teacher professionalisation.



#### ***8.4 The 'Social Democratic Settlement Era' and its Effects upon Teacher Professionalisation***

Professionalisation of teachers was particularly intense during the social democratic settlement era of the 1960's and the early 1970's (Ghail 1994). After the Second World War a economic boom provided the material conditions for a dramatic expansion of mass education and 'a modicum' of teacher professionalisation (Robertson 1996;35). Teaching professionalisation included becoming a highly trained and all graduate profession with the right to be critically involved in curriculum content and education policies Harris (1994),(Ghail 1994). With the establishment of the Schools Council the notion of the legitimated state professional developed.

During the early 1970s when the process of teachers' professionalisation was supposed to be particularly effective Lortie states that:

'Although teachers have managed to dull the edges of administrative power, they continue to be employed subordinates' (Lortie 1975;22 in Hargreaves and Goodson 1996).

Hence even during the democratic consensus of the 1960s and 1970s the professional status of teachers was contested and ambiguous. After nearly a century of trying to achieve the illusive goal of professionalism, teaching was only 'partially professionalised' at best (Lortie 1975). According to Robertson teachers failed to acknowledge that the 1960s and 1970s was simply 'enlightened liberalism' (Robertson 1996;36). In a somewhat deterministic analysis Robertson

states teachers did not challenge the 'insidious controls of professionalism' and form class interests with their students. However even Robertson acknowledges that there was some professionalisation of teachers during this period. This 'golden era' was however set to change.

From the late 1970s to the present this progressive process of professionalisation has radically altered (Robertson 1996; Ball 1994; Grace 1987; Apple 1986; Ozga 1988; Harris 1994). That this process has had dramatic effects upon the professional status of teaching is summed up by Harris.

'By 1995 teachers are likely to have lost in a single decade most of the gains made in a single century' (Harris 1994 (viii) in Robertson 1996).

In the next section I examine the political, economic and social conditions that gave rise to this loss of professionalism.

### ***8.5 Proletarianisation or professionalisation?***

Concerning the condition of postmodernity upon teachers' lives, Hargreaves argues that

'The compression of time and space is creating accelerated change, innovation overload and *intensification* in teachers' work' (Hargreaves 1995;158).

The key question for many writers concerns whether this process of 'intensification' of teacher's work in the form of accountability and managerial duties, is leading to the professionalisation or proletarianisation of teachers.

Firstly I examine the generalised arguments of Apple (1986), Robertson (1996) Ball (1994) and Ozga (1995) who argue that under the conditions of post-Fordist<sup>59</sup> 'flexible accumulation', teaching is being proletarianised. Using the work of Woods 1994, Ghail 1992, Troman 1996 and Helsby 1996 I problematise the proletarianisation discourse. These writers have carried out recent small scale qualitative research and argue that within the micro politics of teaching there is space for teacher creativity and possibly professionalisation. Hargreaves and Goodson's (1996) claim that both processes of 'professionalisation' and 'proletarianisation' are occurring at the same time and hence the restructuring of teacher's work has been highly contradictory.

### **8.6 *The proletarianisation advocates***

Ozga (1995) argues that the discourse of 'new' professionalism, that is the intensification of teachers work represents a further means of occupational control over teachers. Robertson develops this occupational control thesis. She critiques the 'new' professionalism offered to teachers by stating that,

'Teachers will be weighed down by the pressure of management, time constraints, larger classes and the management of other workers.....*an outcome teachers have confused with professionalism.*' (Robertson 1996;51 *my emphasis*).

Robertson depicts teachers as being deluded by the 'new' professional work

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<sup>59</sup> Harvey (1989) describes 'post-Fordism' as originating in the 'condition of postmodernity'. The on-going economic shift from modernism to postmodernism which begun to occur in 1960s has had dramatic ramifications in political and social life. 'Flexible accumulation regimes' in the economy has predicated fundamental changes in teachers' working lives (Harvey 1989). These new 'flexible accumulation regimes' have partially occurred as a result of new technologies.

practices. Robertson (1996;52) perceives teachers as being 'blinkered by an ideology of professionalism' with regard to the restructuring of their work and therefore unable to critique the changes. In a similar way Apple (1989) states that

'The increasing intensification of the teaching act .....is *misrecognised* as a symbol of their increased professionalism' (Apple 1989;45 *my emphasis*).

By 'misrecognising' the restructuring of their work, Apple portrays teachers as being duped and deluded. Apple's and Robertson's generalised argument characterises teachers as passive victims, complying with the intensification of their work, in the false belief that this will bring them increased professional status.

Ball (1994;49) proposes that there has been an increase in 'the technical elements of teachers' work and a reduction in the professional'. This 'technicist' debate and its negative effects upon teacher professionalism is similar to the reductive intensification arguments of Robertson and Apple. However in later specific qualitative research in one south London comprehensive school, Ball (1996) notes that the restructuring of teachers' work produces contradictory outcomes. On the one hand teachers are 'empowered' by the new demands whilst on the other their professional 'collegiality' is replaced by competition.

### **8.7 The professionalisation advocates**

Concerning Apple's proposition that teachers 'misrecognised' the restructuring processes as falsely leading to professionalisation, Woods (1994) in his research claims that 'there were no signs of 'misrecognition' amongst the teachers. Woods (1994) shows this argument is a reduction of teachers' complex experiences and teachers' interpretation of restructuring. In the two primary schools Woods examined, the restructuring had been 'a major epiphany' in the primary teachers' lives and careers but their perceptions of the changes was not one of 'false consciousness'. Woods research was concerned with how 'creative' teachers adapt and control their work situation, despite the constraints and opposing pressures. Working with Nias (1989) notions of primary teacher's identities being strongly professional, Woods' teachers creatively strived to not only comply with the new work practices but to *actively engage* with them and 'strategically redefine' working in some way or other to change the situation in line with their own values and sense of self. This is because teachers sense of self continually needs reworking, defending, maintaining and promoting (Woods 1994).

'Teaching is very much part of these teachers' substantial self. They have a strong sense of professionalism. They know how they want to teach and are not going to be dictated to. They consequently strongly resist the notion that they are being deprofessionalised'. (Woods 1994;402).

The restructuring had made a significant impact upon teacher's sense of self but teachers had skilfully and creatively redefined the situation to fit with their sense of self. In this micro-political context Woods identified teachers who continually and creatively worked to change the situation in favour of their professional sense of self. Hence despite the generalised proposition by Ball (1994) that the

restructuring of teachers work has led to its 'overdetermination' and professional reduction, some of Woods' teachers appear to be in control of the changes and creatively producing and interpreting 'spaces' within the restructuring<sup>60</sup>.

This may be because teachers were becoming more familiar with the principles and practices of the National Curriculum and other legal requirements. Hence according to Helsby (1996) teachers could find the 'spaces' in which 'to manipulate the requirements in accordance with their own professional judgements' (Helsby 1996;141). Being familiar and confident with the National Curriculum and other restructuring issues was leading the teachers in Helsby's study to *reappropriate* teaching according to their own professional judgements.

In a primary school Troman (1996) found that:

'The evidence from this case study of the experiences, resistances and work of the 'new professionals' does not offer much support for theories which stress the overdetermined nature of schooling' (Troman 1996;485).

Troman argues that this is because teachers filter the restructuring policies through their professional sense of self and existing ideologies. Troman found teachers' responses to restructuring to be contradictory and ambiguous. He noted that teachers comply with the new professionalism if it articulates with their own interests. If the restructuring does not meet their existing sense of self and needs then it is resisted in various ways. Troman found that the staff were not

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<sup>60</sup> It must be noted that despite this generally upbeat interpretation of the effects of the restructuring of teachers work, several teachers had left teaching altogether as a result of the changes. Their sense of self as a teacher had been challenged too much by the restructuring and they had voluntarily left. This is in line with Troman (1996) who found that in one school between 1986 and 1996 most of the 'old professionals' had left teaching.

totally compliant nor simply 'technicist professionals whose values articulated wholly with official definitions'. Even during an OFSTED inspection Troman 'found resistance within accommodation' to certain managerialist changes which the teachers did not agree with. Hence a teacher would make a 'primary adjustment' which would appear as compliance. However, this would simply obfuscate a 'secondary adjustment' which would be counter hegemonic.

Troman identified two broad groups of teachers, the 'old professionals' and the 'new professionals'. Many of the old professionals had voluntarily left the school which can be interpreted as a sign of resistance. Those old professionals who remained tended to complain and reluctantly carried out the new managerial tasks. Even some of the new professionals resisted certain changes. Troman identifies some of the following resistances from the new professionals; reluctantly doing the required school development planning and perhaps not doing all of it, treating teacher appraisal casually and swapping undesired lessons. However the new professionals were generally seen to be supportive of increased managerialism and accountability.

In his research in a secondary school Mac an Ghail (1992) refers to the new professionals as 'the new entrepreneurs'.

'For them it was not only inaccurate to claim that teachers were being deskilled, rather they claimed that a process of reskilling and upskilling was taking place' (Mac an Ghail 1992;183).

This is an unequivocal interpretation of the process of professionalisation which is deemed to be occurring as a result of the restructuring of teachers' work.

Nevertheless Mac an Ghail refers to teacher's occupational 'culture' as being in crisis. In addition to the new entrepreneurs Mac an Ghail identified 'the professionals' and the 'old collectivists' who were both opposed to the restructuring on ideological grounds. The professionals favoured traditional hierarchical management practices as opposed to flat managerial decision making. The old collectivists strongly opposed what they saw as the depoliticisation of the schools decision making process. Prior to the restructuring both ideological groups had opposed each other, now however they had formed an 'informal alliance' united against the changes and could be seen 'conspiratorially huddled together discussing the latest curricular change' (Mac an Ghail 1992;189). Hence the restructuring is sifted through teacher's pre-existing occupational ideologies. It would seem however that teacher's comply with certain restructuring issues and not with others hence the contradictory effects and outcomes of the restructuring changes.

### ***Conclusion***

Helsby (1996) contests that the micro-political context of secondary schools departmental cultures are important in developing teachers' sense of professionalism. Hence a teacher's complex and shifting sense of professionalism is dependent upon the micro-political culture of the department *and* the school. Within such a micro-political context a teacher's professionalism may be complex, contingent and contradictory (Helsby 1996). Thus:

'Teacher professionalism is neither universally negative nor positive; pernicious nor benign' (Goodson and Hargreaves 1996;20).



Day (1997) contends that a teacher's professional life is 'inexorably contradictory' and one of the 'tricks' is learning to live with such professional contradictions. These 'tricks' may not always be successful so that it is within such 'choas' and dissonance that teachers make sense of their professional lives (Ball 1996).

## ***Chapter Nine:***

### ***An Analysis of Gambia College Student Teachers' Attitudes Towards the Teaching Profession***

#### ***Introduction***

This chapter provides a quantitative perspective to the qualitative material collected in Lamin School. It examines the complex and contradictory reasons that Gambia College student teachers' have in wanting to become teachers. A questionnaire was used to collect the data which is presented in tabular and graphical forms. The Gambia College is the only teacher training institution in the country. In 1996 annual intake to the Primary Teachers' Certificate (PTC) course was limited to one hundred and forty students<sup>61</sup>. Total number of applications for the PTC course from secondary school leavers, adults, and serving unqualified teachers was 1,324 in 1996<sup>62</sup>. Competition for places on the PTC course at The Gambia College was therefore high.

Decisions to become teachers vary with different individuals and their diverse circumstances (Yong 1995). The literature on teachers' reasons for entering the

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<sup>61</sup> This is far too small an annual intake to successfully meet The Gambia's present needs for qualified primary teachers.

teaching profession tends towards a polarisation between developed and developing countries (Yong 1995). In developed countries altruistic reasons, such as 'caring for children' and 'generally doing good' tend to be emphasised (Nias 1989; Young 1995; Sugrue 1996). In developing countries the literature tends towards functional reasons such as salary and job security (Yong 1995; Chivore 1988; Abangma 1981; Nwagwu 1981). In this chapter I suggest that both altruistic and functional reasons are important in attracting Gambians to the teaching profession.

The chapter is organized into altruistic and utilitarian reasons for wanting to become a teacher. Altruistic reasons for teaching are usually concerned with a personal commitment to ideas related to 'service' and generally aiding society (Grace 1978; Nias 1985 in Ball and Goodson 1985). These altruistic or vocational reasons for teaching may aspire to an 'ideal' mythical teacher type (Day 1993). Utilitarian and functional reasons for teaching refer to the practical usage which the teacher benefits from the profession such as the salary. Additionally, the questionnaire elicited the diverse socio-economic backgrounds of the students. Many of the student teachers were using teaching as a means of social mobility (Lortie 1975).

The sample size was 21 female student teachers and 160 male student teachers. More female student teachers (67%) felt generally satisfied with their future

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<sup>62</sup> Personal correspondence with the college store keeper who is responsible for the coveted application forms.

profession than male student teachers (57%). Those who were dissatisfied with their future profession believed they would remain in the profession because of family obligations and lack of alternatives to teaching. Careful analysis of the data allowed for a Gambian 'mythical' teacher to emerge (Day 1993) who is patriotic, committed and God-fearing.

### **9.1 *The Aims of the Questionnaire***

I wrote the questionnaire in my final term as an English lecturer at The Gambia College. I typed several drafts on my Macintosh computer which miraculously made it to The Gambia and back in one piece. Acquiring the necessary ream of paper and getting nearly two hundred copies of the questionnaire printed, required hours of discussion and many boxes of Chinese Green Tea<sup>63</sup> being given to the 'correct' members of the College's administrative staff!

The format, style and questions of the questionnaire were based upon a survey with primary and secondary teachers in Tanzania (Carr-Hill 1990). (See Appendix Six). After several pilot questionnaires the final questionnaire successfully elicited a broad range of stimulating responses from the students. The questionnaire was aimed at eliciting the student teachers' motivation for joining the teaching profession and their attitudes towards teaching. The questionnaire contains both closed responses (yes/no); ranking exercises and

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1 Chinese Green Tea is used by many Gambians to make 'atire' tea which is shared as a social drink after work.

open questions in which the students were asked to write their feelings and attitudes on different aspects of teaching. The students written comments about teaching included: the salary; their satisfaction with teaching<sup>64</sup>; why they chose to become teachers; and any other general comments about teaching they wanted to make.

I administered the questionnaires at the end of the summer term to the one hundred and eighty one primary student teachers in the English classes which I taught. To ensure a good response rate from the student teachers they were asked to complete it during one of my English lessons. At the beginning of the lesson I explained why I wanted the questionnaire to be completed. I read through the questionnaire with the students and explained how to complete it. Nearly all the students were most keen and enthusiastic to complete the surveys. Indeed some of the students told me that they were pleased that I was taking their opinions and concerns to a University in England.

## ***9.2 The Primary Teachers' Certificate at The Gambia College***

In order to gain professional teaching status it is necessary to obtain the Primary Teachers' Certificate (PTC). The PTC is acquired by one of two ways: working as an unqualified teacher who takes the summer 'up-grading' course; or through

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<sup>64</sup> Nias (1989) noted that there was 'an absence of a theoretical framework' concerned with teachers' satisfaction. She referred to Lortie's definition which I use. 'The level of satisfaction is thought of as summarising the person's assessment of his total rewards in teaching' (Lortie 1975;89).

the full-time two year residential Gambia teacher training college. Several frustrated unqualified teachers told me that the money for the 'up-grading courses' was embezzled and thus the courses did not run<sup>65</sup>. Thus the only way to ensure qualified teacher status was through attendance on the Primary Teachers' Certificate course at The Gambia College.

The male student teachers were predominately aged between 20 and 28, were Mandinka, Muslim and from rural farming backgrounds. The female student teachers were predominately aged between 19 and 25, Mandinka, Muslim and largely from urban backgrounds. It is important to note that there were considerable differences amongst the student teachers' motivations for joining the profession, their projected levels of satisfaction with teaching and with their commitment to the profession. My research is thus in agreement with Cole (1985) who noted the heterogeneity of attitudes towards teaching as work amongst British student teachers. The SPSS analysis of the questionnaires cross-tabulated the male and female responses, thus highlighting the differences between the male and female student teachers.

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<sup>65</sup> An experienced qualified teacher at Lamin School angrily told me that he had been employed as a Teacher Trainer on the 'up-grading' courses. He furiously related to me how World Bank money which was supposed to finance the up-grading courses had been stolen by corrupt Government officials. Even if the 'up-grading courses' did run, certification and graduation often did not occur and therefore officially the teachers remained unqualified.

### **9.3 There are considerably more male than female student teachers at The Gambia College**

The low Gambian secondary school female enrollment of 35% (Education Statistics 1996, Ministry of Education), is due to religious and cultural factors (Obasi 1997; Kea 1997) and poverty<sup>66</sup>. In order to achieve the necessary five West African Ordinary Level qualifications to gain access to The Gambia College attendance at Secondary Schools is required. Thus because of the low female school population, there is a low female intake for the Primary Teachers' Course at The Gambia College.

**Table 9.1: Male and Female Total Student Teachers' Numbers (1993-1994)**

<u>Sex</u>	<u>Total Number</u>	<u>Percent</u>
Male	160	88
Female	21	12

Although The Gambia and Botswana are not directly comparable, it is interesting to note that as a result of Botswanaian positive discrimination for female student teachers, 83% of the primary teacher training students were female (Mogami 1991). The Gambia College is attempting to redress this very low intake of female student teachers. When I left The Gambia in 1996 an additional twenty-five female student teachers, some of whom did not have the officially required 5

'O' Level passes, were accepted on to the PTC course. They were being given intensive support on their maths and english during the summer holidays.

#### **9.4 *The Student Teachers' Cultural 'Myths' of Teaching***

For the student teachers to arrive at an understanding of teaching as work (Day 1990) nearly a third were able to draw from their experience of working as unqualified teachers. Additionally, in order to complete the questionnaire, these experienced student teachers and those with no experience, were able to draw upon Gambian cultural 'myths' of teaching (Day 1993). Day defines cultural myths in teaching:

'....as providing a set of "ideal" images, definitions, justifications and measures for thought and activity in schools' (Day 1993:12).

Embedded Gambian cultural *myths* about teaching help to inform student teachers' perceptions of teaching as work. These teacher myths are sometimes uncritically accepted by the students as representing the "ideal" teacher, an ideal which they aspired to (Day 1993; Sugrue 1996). The students referred to their colleagues who they believed fitted the Gambian 'ideal' as a 'born teacher'.

At the end of micro-teaching sessions with the student teachers at The Gambia College, some of the students called out "born teacher" in support of colleagues'

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<sup>66</sup> There are a number of other reasons why girls school attendance is low. This complex issue



efforts. "Born teacher" is a Gambian cultural myth of the "ideal teacher". A "Born teacher" is a complex package of ideas, images and conceptions of what the students feel a (Gambian) teacher ought to be like. Thus by examining student teachers' understanding of teaching as work this chapter begins to explore notions of what the "ideal" teacher is in the Gambian cultural context. It is important to note that the myths are folk tales and metaphors. They are benchmarks which the students ideally see teachers as attaining and are not necessarily reality. That the "ideal" images are not always lived out in reality does not detract from the power of the metaphor in sustaining and creating the student teachers' professional lives.

Being a "born" teacher assumes that the student teacher "naturally" has the necessary personality and characteristics needed to fulfill the mythical 'ideal' teacher. Thus the characteristics of the 'born' teacher are inherent within the student before he/she comes to the college. Since he/she is a 'born' teacher they do not require the pedagogical and subject-matter knowledge acquired from the college (Sugrue 1996). Thus any new knowledge which contradicts the image of the 'born' teacher is likely to be rejected. The values of the ideal Gambian 'born' teacher as being a patriot, God fearing and conservative are powerful in forming student teachers' attitudes towards their profession. In the following section I discuss how the missionary ideology which is prevalent at The Gambia College encourages a particular 'ideal' student teacher.

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is summarised by Brook and Cammish (1991); and Kingand Hill (1993).

### 9.5 The Gambia College's Missionary and Vocational Ideologies

The questionnaire asked the students to tick those motivations which encouraged them to become teachers. Table Two shows nine possible motivations for the student teachers wanting to become teachers. The vocational and missionary reasons were more frequently ticked than the utilitarian reasons.

**Table 9.2: Male and Female Student Teachers' Reasons for Joining the Teaching Profession**

<u>Reasons</u>	<u>Male %</u> (n=160)	<u>Female %</u> (n=21)
To help develop The Gambia	95	90
Possibilities for self-advancement	84	81
Teaching is a safe and secure job	83	89
I wanted to work with children	80	78
Teaching is a respected profession	68	86
I wanted to meet the need for qualified teachers	49	37
Because of the salary	37	31
Parental encouragement	35	25
There was no alternative to teaching	21	8

Within the context of teacher training colleges, such as The Gambia College, a 'missionary' ideology is prevalent and expected of student teachers (Grace 1978; Ball and Goodson 1985). Within this missionary culture the vocational aspects of teaching are emphasised. Concerning his motivation to enter teaching one student wrote:

**'Teaching is more than a profession. For me it is also a vocation because I am called to serve'** (Male PTC student).

This student's use of language is most revealing of his missionary zeal in wanting to become a teacher. Being 'called to serve' has religious connotations of a force beyond the student encouraging him into the profession (Sugrue 1996). The student selflessly followed 'the calling' from above and entered teaching. It is important to note that the students were active in creating the culture of their college. Hence their unselfish, magnanimous public statements concerning teaching may have helped to reinforce such a culture within the college. Other students wrote:

**'Teaching is a noble profession because I want to help the nation. Teachers could only therefore be rewarded by God, not by man'** (Male PTC student).

**'Being a teacher is a noble profession. By that I mean that the Qur'an speaks highly of teaching. Teaching is appreciated by Allah himself'** (Male PTC student).

To reinforce such a self-sacrificing and religious ideology a beautiful and dominating mosque has recently been constructed at the entrance to The Gambia College. Moreover some of my classes at The Gambia College were interrupted by the Imam calling the students for afternoon prayers. Since I was a lecturer at The Gambia College and the reader of the questionnaire, the students were probably encouraged to provide me with altruistic answers which they thought were appropriate within the context of a teacher training college. This contextual dynamic may partially explain why in Table Two the student teachers emphasised the vocational aspects of teaching over instrumentalist motivations. Ball and Goodson note that in the U.K. it is 'the professional ideology of teaching' which:

'...stresses the altruistic and missionary aspects of commitment over and against the utilitarian or pecuniary or alienated' (Ball and Goodson 1985;22).

Thus because of the context and 'the professional ideology of teaching' the vocational and altruistic reason of 'wanting to develop The Gambia' was selected by the students as the most important reason for becoming teachers. Self-advancement, which scored the second highest, has socially wide connotations in The Gambia concerned with obligations to one's extended family. Hence the reason of self-advancement for wanting to become a teacher may also be interpreted as a benevolent motivation. The intrinsically altruistic motivation of 'working with children' also scored highly. Nias (1989) and Young (1995) similarly found that teachers were motivated by such altruistic reasons.

Despite the fact that upon graduation a qualified teachers' salary was reasonable, and within the The Gambian economic context highly sought after, this utilitarian variable scored poorly in the students choice of motivation. Similarly although there were few alternative professional jobs available in The Gambia, especially for women, it was the least chosen reason for becoming a teacher. The philanthropic culture dominant amongst the Gambia college students, may have inspired them to select the benevolent motivations. I have organized my data into two groups, vocational and functional reasons for becoming a teacher which reflects the discussion above.

***A: Vocational Reasons for Joining the Teaching Profession:***

***9.6 National Development***

In Table Two it can be seen that a wish for Gambian national development was the most important reason that both male and female student teachers were training to become teachers. Amongst the student teachers there was a strong positive commitment to teaching on nationalist grounds. Even those teachers who had reluctantly 'drifted' into teaching (Cole 1985) cited national development as a positive effect of teaching. Cooksey et al (1990) found a similarly high percentage of Tanzanian student teachers had entered the profession for nationalist reasons. He noted:

'Sceptics may doubt altruistic motives such as the desire to "build the nation", but it should not be forgotten that the education system has been an arena of attempts at political and ideological education over the years' (Cooksey et al 1990)

Similarly, there was a strong belief amongst Gambians in general, not just teachers, that education was most important for Gambian economic development. A strong wish to develop The Gambia ran through the written responses to the open ended questions. A selection of those written responses which are nationalist is given below.

**Table 9.3**

**National Development: Student Teachers' Written Responses**

<p><b>'Education is the tool to national development'</b> (Male PTC student).</p> <p>'Teaching is a very important profession because it entails the over all development of the nation by making its nationals highly educated in order to prepare them for socio-economic development of the nation' (Male PTC student).</p> <p>'Teaching is a very important job because teachers develop the human resources which is the most important task in nation building' (Male PTC student).</p> <p>'Teaching a pupil is teaching a nation and teaching a nation is very important' (Male PTC student).</p> <p>'It is through teachers that scholars are prepared and scholars are the people who develop a nation' (Male PTC student).</p> <p><b>'Without teachers there is no nation. Children all speak different languages and teachers make them learn english.'</b> (Female PTC student).</p>
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Teachers perceive themselves as 'national development workers' educating the nation and binding the diverse Gambian linguistic groups together under the national language of english. The student teachers felt that their work as

teachers in developing the human resources of The Gambia was crucial.

Similarly in the US, Young found that the:

'The greatest proportion of all responses (43.8%) can be characterised as altruistic reasons. Included in this category are a desire to work with children, wanting to contribute to society by educating children, saw the opportunity to shape the future, share knowledge and ideas. In short, it is by and large the lofty mission of the teaching profession that attracts these high quality students'. (Young1995; 285).

(This important aspect and belief of teachers' work being central to national development is further discussed in Chapter Ten). A female PTC student told me the following:

'I wanted to become a teacher to develop my nation. It is very important. Since I was young I have lived in this nation and it has taken care of me. **It employed teachers to teach me until I was finished so it's good for me to pay the nation back.** I can do that by teaching other people and serving them' (Female PTC student).

This student felt a sense of obligation to The Gambian state. The Gambian state provided teachers for her and she felt it was now her responsibility to teach other Gambians. She wanted to pay the state back. On another occasion this student told me that she wanted to know what she could do for The Gambia rather than what it could for her<sup>67</sup>.

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<sup>67</sup> I used the student teacher's passionate wish for national development in the management of my classes. Some of my classes were timetabled for the late evening 5.30 pm to 6.30 pm when

## **9.7 *Teaching is a Respected Profession***

A high proportion of the students (men 68% and women 86%) were motivated to become teachers because they felt that the profession was respected. In Brunei Darussalam 90% of the trainees were attracted to the teaching profession because they believed that teachers were well respected by the community (Yong 1995;116) That student teachers felt their chosen profession was respected by society has a significant impact upon their perception of teachers' work (Ball and Goodson 1985). Young (1995;278) states that 'the motives for teaching are strongly influenced by the status of the profession'. That the Gambian student teachers believed that society respected the teaching profession may partially explain the students' overwhelming belief in the importance of their work as shown in the following table.

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both I and the students were hot and tired. (The college's timetable often involved the students in lectures throughout the whole day from 9.00 am to 6.30 pm). The students were, understandably, rather reluctant to give their full participation to the lecture, the activities and the assignment. However I noticed that if I mentioned the fact that 'the work might help in the development of The Gambia' or encouraged them 'to think of the assignment in terms of national development' the student's were encouraged to participate more actively.



**Table 9.4: Is Teaching an Important Profession?**

<u>How Important is the Teaching Profession?</u>	<u>% of Men</u> (n=158)	<u>% of Women</u> (n=28)
Very Important	75	61
Of average importance	25	39

As noted above the students felt that teaching was crucial in national development. Concerning the importance of teaching the students wrote the following:

**Table 9.5**

**Students' written responses concerning the importance of teaching.**

'Teaching is the most important job in any country. After being a teacher there is no other job in the world which you cannot do' (Male PTC teacher).
'Teaching is very important because it is the backbone of any country as people are taught new things to be used in developing the nation' (Male PTC student).
'Teaching is a significant job because it involves teaching the future leaders of the country' (Male PTC teacher).
'Future development of any nation is determined by the calibre of youths modeled through education. Therefore teaching is very important' (Male PTC student).

Once again it can be seen that teacher's work is deemed important because it is closely bound up with national development. The perception amongst the students of their profession being respected by society and being important

contributed towards their high levels of general satisfaction with teaching as work (63%). The student teachers' attitudes towards their salary are discussed below within the functional group of reasons for choosing to become a teacher.

**B. Functional Reasons for Joining the Teaching Profession:**

**9.8 'Teaching pays a good salary' (Male PTC student):**

UNESCO (1984), Nwagwu (1981), Abangma (1981) and Chivore (1988) all report that salaries are probably the most important factor in determining the attractiveness of the teaching profession. In Zimbabwe salary was the highest ranked factor in making teaching attractive out of 21 variables (Chivore 1988). Hence a teacher's satisfaction with his or her salary is critical in determining their general satisfaction with teaching. Student teacher levels of satisfaction with their salary is shown in Table Four.

**Table 9.6: Levels of satisfaction with their future salaries**

<u>How satisfied are you with a teachers' salary?</u>	<u>% of Men</u> (n=158)	<u>% of Women</u> (n=28)
Satisfied	46	74
Dissatisfied	54	26

Upon graduation 46% of men think that a teacher's salary is O.K. and better. Fully 74% of women believe that a qualified teachers' salary is O.K. and better. In The Gambia women generally have less employment opportunities than men (Kea 1997) hence their greater satisfaction with a qualified teachers' salary (Peil 1977; Obasi 1987).

Many of the student teachers, especially the men, originate from poor rural farming families. A farming income is dependent upon seasonal changes and the fluctuating market prices for agricultural products (Social Dimensions of Adjustment 1995). Thus a farmers' income is unpredictable and when the crops are growing during the rainy season from July to September there is little money to be made. This is known as the 'hungry season' when malnourishment is common in rural areas (Quinn 1978). Thus *comparatively* to many of the student's rural backgrounds a teacher's fixed monthly salary is very satisfactory.

Gambian student teachers feel satisfied with their salary because they are paid on the civil service pay scale (see Chapter Eight). A teacher compares his or her salary with other professionals with similar qualifications (Chivore 1988; Passi 1990). Thus, in The Gambia, because teachers are paid on the civil service pay scale, they are comparatively content with their salary.

Table 9.7

**Students Positive Written Responses on their Future Salaries**

'Looking at the economic part of it, it is simpler to earn or benefit when you go to the teaching field than any other job.' (Female PTC student).

'If you are a teacher you get paid at the end of the month. To get a job in The Gambia is very difficult. To be a teacher is easier.' (Female PTC student).

**'I am very satisfied with the teacher's salary since Gambian teachers are amongst the highly paid civil servants'** (Male PTC Student).

'Teaching really pays quite a good salary' (Male PTC student)'

Hence the following reasons: the lack of alternative jobs, the monthly salary and the fact that teachers are paid on the civil service pay scale, combine to make these students feel satisfied with their future qualified teachers' salary. However, in the following box are some of the reasons why nearly half of the men and a quarter of the women were dissatisfied with their future teachers' salaries.

**Table 9.8**

**Students' Negative Written Responses on their future Salaries**

'The cost of living is very high nowadays. Only a quarter of my problems can be met with a teacher's salary' (Male PTC student).

'I will have to feed and house myself up-country and do the same for my family down here' (Male PTC student).

'Considering the time it takes for qualification and the work load in the field a teachers' salary is too low' (Female PTC student).

'As a teaching you are only depending upon your monthly income. It is too meagre' (Male PTC student).

These students complained that the cost of living was now so high, especially in urban areas, that the qualified teachers' salary was too small. If posted up-country they stated that they would have to support themselves and their families who might be living elsewhere. In addition some of the students felt that considering the length of a teachers' training and a teachers' work load that they should be paid a higher salary. Some of the students complained that unlike other professions teachers could not make extra money.

Thus student teachers are approximately divided in their attitudes towards their future salaries. However given that teachers often state dissatisfaction with their salaries (Webb 1985) a high proportion of Gambian student teachers, especially the women, declared that they were content with their salaries. Salary contentment is critical for general job satisfaction (Nwagwu 1981; Chivore 1988). In the following section I examine student teachers, especially female student

teachers, generally high levels of satisfaction with teaching, which may be connected with salary satisfaction.

### **9.9 Student Teachers' General Satisfaction with Teaching**

In Table Five the student teachers overall satisfaction with teaching as a profession is shown.

**Table 9.9: How Satisfied Are You With Teaching?**

<u>Level of Satisfaction</u>	<u>% of Men</u> (n=158)	<u>% of Women</u> (n=21)
<b>Very Satisfied</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>48</b>
<b>Satisfied</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>19</b>
<b>O.K.</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>19</b>
<b>Dissatisfied</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>Very Dissatisfied</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>14</b>

Half of the women and a quarter of the men stated that they were 'very satisfied' with teaching. 67% of women and 57% of men were satisfied or very satisfied with teaching. Thus once again it can be seen that female student teachers are generally more satisfied with teaching than male student teachers. It is possible that the Gambian female students were generally more satisfied with teaching than the men because the women may have had less opportunities in the labour market because of discrimination (Peil 1977; Obasi 1997). The female student teachers were therefore more glad of the opportunity to be teachers. The male student teachers may have felt less satisfied with teaching than the women because they perceived that there were more job opportunities available to them with potentially higher earnings.

A further measure of eliciting satisfaction with teachers' work is to ascertain if they would encourage their children to take up their profession (Carr-Hill 1990). A substantial majority (85%) of both male and female teachers stated that they would encourage any future children to enter the teaching profession.

**Table 9.10 : Would The Student Teachers Advise any future children to take up the teaching profession?**

	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>
<b>Men (n=158)</b>	<b>85%</b>	<b>15%</b>
<b>Women (n=21)</b>	<b>86%</b>	<b>14%</b>

The following student teacher could find many positive reasons to support their offspring's choice of teaching:

'I would encourage my teenage son/daughter to be a teacher, if I have any in the future, because teaching is a way of developing our motherland, it is an interesting job, pays well and it offers safe and secure employment etc' (Male PTC student).

Thus it can be seen that student teachers' high level of projected satisfaction with their work encourages them to support their children's choice of teaching as a career.

#### ***9.10 Student teachers use of teaching as a means of social mobility***

Traditionally teaching has been used as an avenue for social mobility (Lortie 1975; Grace 1978; Robertson 1996-see Chapter Four). Yong (1995) notes that:

'In the developing countries teaching can still offer people from the lower class an avenue for socio-economic advancement and a better life. Those in teaching are often considered as having a good job. The notion expressed by Lortie (1975) that 'Teaching is clearly white collar, middle-class work and as such offers upward mobility for people in blue-collar or middle-class families' is still very much apparent in many developing countries' (Yong 1995:278).



My findings concerning the rural social origins of many of the students at The Gambia College (shown below) and the teachers in Lamin School<sup>68</sup> confirm this social mobility thesis of teaching. Many Gambian teachers wished to work in urban environments where living conditions were higher than in rural areas (Social Dimensions of Adjustment 1995). Similarly in Nigeria, Urwick (1985), found that a majority of Nigerian teachers wanted to live in urban areas for improved living conditions and partly because urban schools functioned better than rural schools.

The differences between rural and urban Gambian material well-being were quite marked. Salaries in urban areas were approximately 4-5 times higher than in rural areas (Gambia Teachers' Union 1995;5). In addition in urban areas services such as hospitals, clean drinking water, secondary schools, television and a greater variety of food produce were to be found. These were generally not found in rural areas. In a rural district a student's sister in law had died whilst giving birth. The student told me that there were complications during the birth and that the woman needed to be transported to hospital. Unfortunately there were no cars or buses in the village. The woman had died whilst on a horse drawn cart to the regional hospital. It was from such stark rural poverty that some of the teachers were attempting to escape in the hope of finding a higher urban standard of living<sup>69</sup>.

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<sup>68</sup> Master's father had been a rural daily paid forestry labourer.

<sup>69</sup> I met several teachers however who were bitter that they now found themselves posted to 'back' to rural areas which they were trying to leave. These teachers told me that they were

### **9.11 The Social Origins of Male and Female Student Teachers at The Gambia College**

Research in Nigeria and Ghana shows that student teachers, especially men, are predominately from lower socio-economic backgrounds which are often rural and agricultural (Peil 1977; Obasi 1987; Bame 1991). My research in The Gambia is consistent with these findings.

**Table 9.11: Gambia College Male Student Teachers' By Parents' Occupation (n=160)**

<u>Occupation</u>	<u>Father</u>	<u>Mother</u>
<b>Farmer</b>	<b>78%</b>	<b>64%</b>

frustrated with the poor housing, lack of social amenities and schools which didn't function properly. They felt trapped by the inflexible Education Ministry's postings system over which they had little control. One of the reasons they had entered the profession was to enjoy the higher standards of living in urban areas and after training they were now bitter that they had now been 'sent back to the provinces'.

<b>Self-employed trader</b>	<b>12%</b>	<b>21%</b>
<b>Government employee (teacher, nurse, police)</b>	<b>6%</b>	<b>2%</b>
<b>Unemployed man/housewife</b>	<b>4%</b>	<b>13%</b>

The table above shows that nearly 80% of the male student teachers are from farming backgrounds. Gambian farmers are predominately subsistence farmers who are rural and poor and many lack formal education (Social Dimensions of Adjustment 1993). Thus upon graduation the male student teacher's monthly salary and education would represent a socio-economic advance when compared with their parents' income. It is possible that fewer male student teachers are from urban areas because there are greater job opportunities in the urban areas particularly for men (Peil 1977).

In Ghana 73% of male primary teachers' fathers were poor, uneducated farmers or fishermen Bame (1993). Similarly, Nigerian male student teachers are from rural, poor and uneducated families (Obasi 1977). Obasi notes:

'The evidence would suggest the fact that most of the student teachers (over 75%) are potential recruits into a social (middle) class whose characteristics differ significantly from that from which they originated' (Obasi 1987;181).

Thus it can be tentatively concluded that, particularly for Gambian men, teacher training provides an opportunity for social mobility. The concept of using teaching for self-development is developed in the next section.

Female student teachers at The Gambia College were also engaged in a process of social mobility, however, more of the women than the men came from an urban socio-economic background.

**Table 9.12: Gambia College Female Student Teachers' By Parents' Occupation (n=21)**

<u>Occupation</u>	<u>Father</u>	<u>Mother</u>
Farmer	31%	49%
Self-employed trader	29%	30%
Government employee (teacher, nurse, police)	31%	14%
Unemployed man/housewife	9%	7%

The female student teachers' parental occupations are considerably more diverse than the male student teachers' parental occupations. Nearly a third of female students' fathers are engaged in salaried government positions which are mostly urban. Urban salaried workers earn approximately five times more than rural workers (Social Dimensions of Adjustment 1993). That their mothers' are predominately farmers can be explained by the high occurrence of women's market gardens close to urban centres (Kea 1997). These female farmers sell

their agricultural produce in shops and in the market (Kea 1997). Thus female student teachers largely come from urban backgrounds with higher incomes than their male colleagues.

Similarly in Ghana less than half of the female primary teachers' fathers were farmers (Bame 1993). In Nigeria Obasi noted the following:

'When cross-tabulated twice as many female student teachers as male student teachers had parents with some form of higher education and higher income backgrounds' (Obasi 1987;179).

Urban wealthier socio-economic backgrounds facilitate girl's secondary school enrollment and therefore educational achievement (Kea 1997). Teaching is one of the few professional opportunities available for educated women in The Gambia. Thus urban female secondary school leavers apply for the Primary Teachers Certificate course at The Gambia College. In the next section I discuss the notion of social mobility and self-advancement in the Gambian context.

### ***9.12 The student teacher's Self-Advancement benefits their extended family***

The second most important reason for both male and female students for entering the teaching profession was for self advancement. In the previous section, I showed how many of the students, especially the men, were engaged in a process of social mobility by becoming teachers. It is important to note that

within The Gambia the notion of 'self', is generally intimately connected with one's extended family. Thus it is critical to note that most teachers' salaries are not solely for themselves but rather for their extended family. This extended family can be large. A female teacher told me the following,

**'If you are working as a teacher everybody is expecting something from you. I have to assist my family. That is clear. I have nearly forty or fifty in my extended family. My father has four wives and three of the wives have children and I will support my nephews and nieces. I have to support them. In my compound I am the only one who has the education to this higher level. I am the only person in the compound who has a monthly salary'. (Female PTC student).**

Self-advancement for this student is intimately bound up with her family. Culturally she has an obligation to help her family because she will be the only family member with a monthly salary. Thus in The Gambia 'self-advancement' is family advancement.

The student teachers stated that teachers' work involves both national development and personal development at the same time. In the following written responses it can be seen that 'self-advancement' is bound up with notions of The Gambia's advancement.

**Table 9.13**

**Self-Advancement: Student Teachers' Written Responses**

'In teaching you can equip yourself with reasons in order to develop understanding, **promote your welfare and the welfare of the nation**' (Male PTC student).

'Teaching is a noble profession. You teach and learn at the same time' (Male PTC student).

'Teaching is a noble job because it develops **our country and our personal standards of knowledge**' (Male PTC student).

'Teaching is very important because it helps to improve ones standard of education' (Female PTC student).

'In teaching one is able to maintain and increase his/her horizon in terms of skills knowledge and values for self-promotion' (Male PTC student).

'Teaching is very important because it helps by reinforcing my academic standards' (Male PTC student).

The student teachers perceived teaching as 'noble' work because teachers are developing their own knowledge. Knowledge and its acquisition is held within high esteem in The Gambia. (See Chapter Eight). These student teachers perceive a close connection between their levels of education and education generally within The Gambia. In a country as small as The Gambia it is perhaps possible to appreciate the students' feelings of close connection between themselves and the nation in general.

### **9.13 Teaching is educative**

In Brunei Darussalam 93% of teacher trainees were attracted to teaching because of the opportunity to further their own education (Yong 1994;123). Ranked number one by Nigerian secondary school leavers as the reason they would enter teacher training college was 'Education in the teacher training colleges is free' (Nwagwu 1981). African teacher training colleges tend to have a high academic course content, hence students' academic aspirations may be partially fulfilled on a teacher training course (Thompson 1984).

As a lecturer at The Gambia College I was aware that some of the students were more keen to develop their personal academic levels of education than their pedagogical knowledge. The curriculum at The Gambia College was heavily weighted towards theoretical aspects and methodology was given a low status. In my English methodology classes the students seemed more interested in the debates around language acquisition theories than in the 'Breakthrough to Literacy' classes for early readers. In addition I noticed that the students were also most interested in their spelling and correct use of grammar. Many of the students expressed an interest in studying abroad and asked me about studying in the U.K. That some of the students' interest lay in general academic theory and transferable skills may have been because some of the students were hoping



to find work other than teaching after graduation or pursue further studies abroad<sup>70</sup>.

#### **9.14 *Teaching is a Safe and Secure Job***

88% of women and 70% of men stated that one of the reasons they were training as teachers was because 'teaching was a safe and secure job'. In a country with high unemployment this was deemed important by the students, especially the female students. A female student teacher told me:

'To get a job in The Gambia as a woman is very difficult. To be a teacher here is easier.' (Female PTC student).

To get a regular monthly salaried job in The Gambia is far from easy and this was one of the motivations for these Gambian students training to become primary teachers. Similarly in Ghana the main advantage of teaching was that it was a 'steady and secure occupation' (Bame 1993;132).

#### **9.15 *'There was no Alternative to Teaching'***

That only 8% of women and 20% of men declared that they were training to become teachers because of 'the lack of alternatives' is a very low figure

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<sup>70</sup> This anecdotal evidence lends support to De Lyon (1989;4) who states: 'In the last part of the nineteenth century, teacher training provided a state-subsidised form of higher education for girls from lower-middle or working class backgrounds'. Present day Gambia and nineteenth century England are not comparable nonetheless this is an interesting argument.

considering The Gambia's high 30% unemployment (Social Dimensions of Adjustment 1995). In Liberia 75% of teacher candidates had entered a teacher training program because they perceived no other option for a job (Lockheed 1991;92). The comparatively small percentage of Gambian students who stated that they entered teaching because of the 'lack of alternatives' may partially be explained by the emphasis upon the vocational and missionary ideology prevalent within teacher training colleges (Ball and Goodson 1985). Within the College's vocational ideology the utilitarian reason of the lack of alternative jobs, however, reflective of the wider economic context outside the College, was not encouraged within its gates.

In Nigeria, Uganda and Botswana teacher training for some was perceived as a functional activity (Nwagwu 1981; Passi 1990; Mogami 1991). Over half of the Nigerian school leavers entering teacher training colleges stated that teaching was 'the only job people can easily get' (Nwagwu 1981). Concerning primary student teachers in Uganda:

'It was not really a deliberate choice to be trained as teachers and they have no love for the profession. Some said that they had tried and failed to transfer to other faculties. Students suggested that they were there because they could see no alternative and that they regarded their training as a stop-gap whilst trying to pursue other endeavors'. (Passi 1990;34).

Similarly in Botswana some entered the profession because there were no other realistic options and teaching was 'a career of last resort' (Magami 1991). Some students at The Gambia College suggested that they also considered their training as a 'stop-gap' whilst searching for other employment.

'I am not planning on being a teacher all my life. I am interested in political affairs and business. After some years as a teacher I will leave the field and do political work.' (Male PTC student).

The above students wish to leave the teaching profession after a few years was reflected in the following table.

**Table 9.14:**  
**Would you like to stay in the teaching profession most of your life?**

	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>
<b>Men (n=158)</b>	<b>55%</b>	<b>45%</b>
<b>Women (n=21)</b>	<b>77%</b>	<b>23%</b>

This statistic shows that many student teachers were unsure about committing themselves to a life of teaching. Similarly in Ghana 72% of male primary teachers and 45% of female primary teachers planned on leaving the profession (Bame 1991). Of this high percentage of Ghanaian student teachers who planned on leaving the teaching profession most subsequently stayed because of the lack of other employment (Bame 1991). In The Gambia this was a similar

case and is discussed in Chapter Eight. 'The inertia of continuance commitment' ensures that even ambivalent and dissatisfied U.K. student teachers stay at college and subsequently within the profession (Ball and Goodson 1985;21). Family responsibilities encourage this process of 'continuance commitment' within The Gambia. In the next section I discuss the process of 'continuance commitment' in more detail.

### ***9.16 The Dissatisfied Students' 'Continuous Commitment' and 'Family Investment' in Teacher Training***

Despite nearly a third of the male students being dissatisfied with teaching and half of all the students not planning to stay in the profession, many of these dissatisfied students nevertheless will become and stay teachers. 'Continuance commitment' (Ball and Goodson 1985) and 'investment' in teaching (Cole 1985) may partially explain this apparent contradiction.

One of the reasons for the almost total successful Gambia College student completion rate was that 'dropping out' was not an option in the context of The Gambia. Leaving college was not an option because of the often substantial 'investment' which the student's family had made in providing an education for the student to gain a place at The Gambia College. To achieve a place at The Gambia College, often meant that parents and other family members, who were often poor, had sacrificed so that at least one family member could receive higher

education. I knew families in which the secondary school fees were so high (typically several thousands of dalasis per year) for the eldest boy that there was not enough money left over for his younger siblings to go to school.

A Gambian family decision to ensure that at least one child went to high school was often based upon rational economic judgment (The Social Dimensions of Adjustment 1995). It was widely believed that the higher a person's level of education, the higher their potential earnings. Thus a student teacher who came from such a family, of which there were many at The Gambia College, felt it an obligation and a duty to successfully complete the teacher training course and receive a qualified teacher's salary. A large percentage of his/her salary would typically be sent to his/her parent's compound. I was told that it would be an insult to their family if a student teacher failed the course. (Failure rate was low at around 5%). A Gambian teacher's family obligations and commitments may explain the apparent contradiction of wishing to leave the profession but not doing so. Similarly in the U.K. Cole notes that:

'Since a teacher's qualifications and experience are barely transferable to another similarly remunerated occupation, teachers may well feel that there is a direct link between domestic commitments and continuance in teaching' (Cole 1985;103).

In Chapter Eight I discuss how some of Lamin's teachers could not leave teaching because they would not get a job which paid as well as teaching.

Continuing family commitments necessitated that the teacher remained within the profession.

### ***Conclusion***

Within a context of high unemployment and widespread poverty 67% of female and 57% of male Gambian student teachers are content with their future profession. 31% of male and 14% of female student teachers are dissatisfied with teaching and are planning to leave if given alternative employment. The student teachers are generally proud to be 'called' to the profession which they feel will develop their 'motherland'. 74% of female and 46% of male students are satisfied with their salary which they will give to their extended families as a matter of duty. Even those student teachers who are dissatisfied with teaching will remain in the profession in order to provide money for their families. Thus my research is in broad agreement with student teacher research in Tanzania. Tanzanian primary student teachers' attitudes and motivations are not as low as their terms and conditions would perhaps lead one to expect (Cooksey 1990). Similarly to Tanzanian student teachers, Gambian student teachers were satisfied with their profession because they generally felt it to be a respected worthwhile profession in which they were making socio-economic advancement.

The chapter has demonstrated that the students hold a fairly firm 'mythical' notion of the 'ideal' teacher (Day 1993).

**'Teaching is the continual brushing from the mind of impurities. A lot of patience, good morals and self-sacrifice are needed to be a teacher' (Male PTC student).**

**'Teaching is a noble profession demanding self-sacrifice and love of the nation. Teachers could only therefore be rewarded by God' (Male PTC student).**

This is the 'ideal' public image of the teacher which the students created and sustained. Crucially these images of the moral, sacrificing and committed patriotic teacher encouraged the students to join and stay in the teaching profession. In the following chapters I examine in more detail these aspects of being a Gambian teacher.

## **Chapter Ten:**

### ***Lamin School Teachers' Experiences of Teaching as Work: A Thematic Analysis***

#### ***Introduction***

Chapters Nine and Ten mainly comprise Lamin School Teachers' 'voices' (Hargreaves 1996). The teachers' 'voices' speak of the range and diversity of their professional work within the broad context of their lives. The themes which this chapter addresses arose from the teachers' interests and stories (Evetts 1994). I attempt to place those experiences within the broad socio-economic context of teaching in The Gambia. Hence this chapter has a detailed introduction in which I hope to signpost the reader through the chapter. In italics I have included the headings and sections of the chapter.

Part A is entitled *The Teachers' Diversity of Reasons for Initially Joining and subsequently Staying in the Teaching Profession*. Part A is organised into six main sections. In the first section I examine those teachers who had attempted to work in professions other than teaching but because of limited job opportunities in The Gambia had reluctantly become teachers. The second section focuses upon two teachers who only remained in teaching to ensure they received their full



pension. In the third section, I examine those teachers who had actively chosen to work in the teaching profession. The two main reasons why these teachers chose to teach was the encouragement of relatives and childhood teacher role models. The fourth section of Part A examines why most *qualified* teachers are generally content with their salaries.

In the fifth section of Part A I discuss the status of the unqualified teachers, who because of their lack of a teaching qualification call themselves unprofessional. Despite the unqualified teacher's low salary they appeared to enjoy teaching. The final section of Part A is concerned with the notion of teachers using the teaching profession for social mobility and self-improvement.

Part B, *Being a Female teacher at Lamin School*, records the experiences of being a female teacher (Acker 1989; Skelton and Hanson 1989; Lacey 1977; Evetts 1989; 1994; 1996; De Lyon and Migniulo 1989). I examine the prevailing Gambian ideologies which state that women are 'natural carers' at home and at school. Women are thus found teaching the lower age groups and despite being in the majority women generally do not occupy management positions in the school. I examine women's differing experiences of promotion and in detail, one teacher, Mrs. Baldeh's career.

## ***The 'Key Informants'***

The brief overview of the key informants (overleaf) is provided to help 'signpost' the reader through the chapter. Twenty nine teachers were interviewed in total but the 'key informants' in the table were most often accessible and I conducted several interviews with each of them.

### ***Section A: The Teachers' Diverse Reasons for Initially Joining and subsequently Staying in the Teaching Profession***

#### ***10.1 Teaching was not a Career of First Choice***

Lamin's teachers presented me with many different reasons for joining the profession. For some teaching was not their first 'choice' of job<sup>71</sup> (Fullan 1991). Indeed 'choice' of job is a highly problematic term in The Gambia where urban unemployment can be as high as 45% amongst young people (Social Dimensions of Adjustment 1995). Teaching became a career for some because of the lack of alternative job opportunities (Passi 1990; Mogami 1991; Bame 1991).

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<sup>71</sup> In the US, Fullan (1991;125) reports that 'National polls indicate that teaching was not the first choice of as much as a third of the teaching force (more so at secondary level).' These findings are similar to mine in The Gambian context.

Mrs. McIntre, a qualified teacher of some twenty years experience who presently taught Class One, explained that within the limited job opportunities of The Gambia, teaching was the only option open to her. It is important to note that job opportunities for women in The Gambia are particularly limited (Kea 1997)<sup>72</sup>. Against her will, Mrs. McIntre's sister had encouraged her to join the teaching profession and initially she had not planned to stay in it. However once in the job and subsequently enjoying a qualified teacher's salary, Mrs. McIntre found it difficult to leave teaching because there was a lack of other job opportunities. Thus she was 'trapped by financial pressures and lack of alternative employment' (Nias 1988;197).

**I don't like teaching.** My sister was a teacher but at that time I was looking for another job. I went for nursing but the first problem I had was that I was posted up-country to Basse as a nurse so I rejected it. My sister encouraged me take up teaching. She wanted me to go to College but I said look leave me in peace I do not want to be a teacher!!! She said just go in for a short while & leave & do another profession. I said let me just start this teaching but I don't want to stay too long. **But once you have joined the teaching field you spend so many years there that it will be very hard for you to leave for another profession....**

If you go in for this teaching field you cannot just leave the job that you are having right now & go for another one unless you have one. Here you cannot just leave & go. Where are you going to get your money from? **To get a job here in The Gambia is very difficult.** If you see one that is more than you have you just have to drop yours and go.... (Mrs. McIntre. My added emphasis).

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<sup>72</sup>The illiteracy rate for women at 76% is twice as high as men's illiteracy rate (The Social Dimensions of Adjustment 1995). There are few white collar jobs in The Gambia hence the few women who are educated tend to work as clerical staff and teachers. Very few women occupy more powerful positions.

The economic circumstances within The Gambia had compelled Mrs. McIntre to join and stay in the profession even though she actively did not like teaching. Being a woman is also highly significant in her choice of profession. Although trained as a nurse, she had 'inadvertently drifted' (Cole in Ball and Goodson 1985) into teaching because as a nurse she was posted up-country to Basse. Basse is at the end of The Gambia where as a single woman she would have been far away from her family and hence vulnerable. The Ministry of Education has a policy of respecting female teachers' wishes to be posted near their families. Hence Mrs. McIntre had reluctantly 'drifted' into teaching. Mrs. McIntre remained in teaching because she had not been able to find a job that paid the same salary as her experienced qualified teacher status paid. Mrs. McIntre explained to me that she was looking for another job as a business woman but had so far been unsuccessful because of the poor economic climate within The Gambia.

Mr. Gassama was an unqualified teacher of eight years experience. I observed him teaching and noted that he was a most enthusiastic and hardworking teacher. Mr. Gassama explained that he had not planned to be a teacher. Like Mrs. McIntre, he would, if circumstances had been favourable, have worked in the medical profession. Mr. Gassama was frustrated that he had not had the opportunity to go to The Gambia Teacher Training College to obtain his qualified

status and thus be paid at the substantially higher qualified rate<sup>73</sup>. Teaching was not Mr. Gassama's first choice of profession but because of the limited job opportunities in The Gambia, teaching was perhaps the next best salaried opportunity. Mr. Gassama had planned to gain a qualification abroad, return to The Gambia and work in the field in which he had gained his qualification. If this plan, which many Gambians I spoke with share, had not 'fallen apart' I would not have found Mr. Gassama in his present unqualified teaching post.

Teaching wasn't my first choice of profession, but it was a chance for me. I wanted to be a medical person and study medicine rather than being a teacher. But I am lucky to be a teacher. I was hoping to travel abroad for further study and then anything I study I would come here and do that job. I have wanted to travel abroad for education since the initial time. That was my target so I was negotiating. It's just that my things fall apart! Otherwise at this time you would not find me here! I want to go Overseas. I had one contact with the Cambridge Tutorial College and they sent their course here and I was hoping that at the end of that course I would go there but it was not possible. I was hoping for that very much. I was hoping to go and learn there and come back as a teacher. It's not bad. I like teaching.  
Do you want to leave teaching?  
And do what? What would I do? It was never my plan to be a teacher.  
(Mr. Gassama, Unqualified Teacher)

Mr. Gassama, as with some other teachers I interviewed, came from a rural farming family. Although Mr. Gassama had wanted to study medicine that

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<sup>73</sup> Qualified teachers were paid at Grade 6 on the Civil Service pay scale (1,500 Dalasai a month) and unqualified teachers were paid at Grade 1 on the Civil Service pay scale (600 Dalasai).

opportunity did not avail itself. Thus teaching for Mr. Gassama was 'a chance'. Within Mr. Gassama's context I interpret a 'chance' to mean that teaching was a medium through which social mobility into the status of an urban salaried worker was possible. By gaining access to the teaching profession this possibility had already been partially achieved. If Mr. Gassama could have achieved qualified teacher status, Mr. Gassama's 'chance' of social mobility from rural unskilled worker to urban salaried professional might have been made more materially tangible than simply being an unqualified teacher. Mr. Gassama enjoyed teaching and was making the best out of being an unqualified teacher in the poor economic situation of The Gambia over which he had little control.

Mr. Bah, a qualified teacher of about thirty five years old, was acting as Senior Master of Class Three. The Senior Master job description was ambiguous, hence Mr. Bah spent large amounts of time sitting under the mangoe tree. (I discuss the changing situation of Senior Masters and Mistresses in Chapter Nine.) Hence I often chatted with him and he became a key informant (Woods 1986). Mr. Bah had initially, rather reluctantly, drifted into teaching. Despite not initially choosing to become a teacher, Mr. Bah had compromised, become a teacher and was now not prepared to leave the profession.

Mr. Bah; **Well here you know you take the job that is available. Its not just I like this job so I'll take this one and I don't like that so I won't do that. The first chance that comes to you is what we do. Because chances of jobs are very limited.....**  
I tried Forestry, I went for interview and I was dropped, I tried Community Development also, I was dropped, I tried Nursing, I

was dropped. Then one day a friend of mine came home with forms for teaching for the two of us. **I would never have planned to be a teacher in fact.** Then we filled the forms and sent them and the day of the exams we passed and this is how we became teachers.

G. P.R-H; So why did you try for all these other different positions before you came to teaching?

Mr. Bah; That was the time I left school newly. I was just gambling for places. It was the first chance I get. I never planned in fact to become a teacher. Then my friend came from school and brought those forms, then I sat for the exams and went through, then I was posted. **If we are frank most of us never wanted to become teachers, but it is not easy to get jobs here.**

G.P.R-H; So you are staying in the profession because of the salary?

That is one reason. There are many reasons. The main reason why I want to stay is because I want to be part of the solution to the educational problem rather than a passive spectator. So maybe I will just have to continue with it and try to part of the solution rather than being a spectator to the solution of the problem.

Family commitment is also another. That is where the salary comes in. I have a family to take care of. If I don't work, they will not sympathise. They will say "ah ha he had a job and he quit and that is his problem now". If I quit teaching after so many years I will have to start from scratch again.

G.P. R-H; What would be your first choice then?

Mr. Bah; My first choice would have been to work with the Forestry. I would have loved that very much, but then no chance. **But in the small employment opportunities within The Gambia you have to make a compromise. Teaching is a compromise. The longer I stay within the profession, the more affection I have for it.** I have come across a lot of children, colleagues, and I learn a lot from the profession. I have gone to places and met people whom I had never expected to meet. Different cultures within the course of my job. Different kinds of people and ethnic groups. As a result now I don't want to quit, so easily. (Mr. Bah, Senior Master Class Three).

Mr. Bah had inadvertently become a teacher because his other job 'choices', of which there were several, had not come to fruition despite being interviewed. Mr. Bah confirmed Mogami's (1991) research in Botswana that there were few jobs available in Botswana and consequently you could not be too particular but rather had to take the first opportunity available.

**'Unfortunately, many teachers in Botswana, especially primary teachers, enter the profession only because they have no other realistic options. If education is to be improved in Botswana we have to find ways to make teaching attractive so that it is no longer a career of last resort. We must find ways of attracting in to the teaching profession able men and women who come there because it is their career of choice (Mogami 1991).**

Mr. Bah's reasons for joining and staying in the teaching profession remained however contradictory and ambiguous. It is most important to note that the political and social context can radically affect the ways in which teachers experience teaching (Ball and Goodson 1985). Since Mr. Bah had become a teacher in 1985, the status of the profession had, according to Mr. Bah significantly improved from 'something low down to something held high up'. This important social and political change was discussed in Chapter Two and affected his perception of being a teacher. Due to the significant improvement in the socio-political perception of teaching Mr. Bah was now much more interested in teaching than had previously been the case.



Mr. Bah was concerned about education in The Gambia and this he said was his 'prime reason' for staying in the profession. Moreover he told me that if he did leave the profession after twelve years it would be very difficult for him to find a job which paid as well as teaching. He had advanced through the profession to acting Senior Master and was now working in a well funded school on the coast. There were many aspects of teaching which Mr. Bah enjoyed and he now had 'affection' for it. This 'affection' was probably both generated by himself, making the best of a compromised situation, and a genuine interest in education. In this sense Mr. Bah's motivation for remaining a teacher was the same as Mr. Gassama.

## **10.2 *Teaching was an 'Irkesome Necessity'* (Beynon 1985):**

Some teachers, who were near to the retirement age of 55, were staying in the teaching profession in the hope of ensuring their retirement pensions. Mr. Jatta, the deputy headteacher who had been teaching twenty six years, told me that he chosen to be a teacher and had initially enjoyed teaching. Now, however, at the end of his long career he was frustrated that he had never been given a Headship. In the following interview Mr. Jatta told me that he would have liked to leave the profession but was unable to leave for fear of losing his pension.

Mr. Jatta: I wouldn't say that I have made rapid progress in my career. I have been teaching all my life and I have never headed a school. In my opinion I have been very conscientious and hard working. Maybe the Ministry have their own reasons for treating

me the way I have been treated. I have seen Junior teachers handling schools as Heads and some of them have not been working as hard as me. But this has not discouraged me and I think that I am doing a good job for my country. Never mind that I am not rewarded professionally. If it is money that you want don't come into the profession. I am not discouraged and never have been at any moment.

G.P. R-H: Now that you are 50, you are old enough to retire.

Mr. Jatta: Well I have to stay since I have a large family to support. I cannot just get up and go! The longer I stay the bigger the pension is, so I remain here. (Mr. Jatta).

Despite claiming that he was not 'discouraged', Mr. Jatta was frustrated with not being promoted to a Headship. He complained about the children, his office, the salaries and the promotion system. I felt his frustration too with the interview and I did not carry out anymore interviews with him. He was honest about remaining in the profession because he had no choice to do otherwise. He had a large family to support and had to ensure the maximum pension.

Mr. Camarra was similarly frustrated that he had not been given a headship and remained in the profession to ensure his pension. Like many Gambians, it was not just Mr. Jatta and Mr. Camarra themselves who were dependent upon their wage, but also their large extended families. Mr. Camarra had the responsibility for children's secondary school fees and had to fulfill that duty. However whilst I was at Lamin school Mr. Camarra seemed most disinterested in teaching and rarely even went into a classroom.

**I want to retire but the family is not yet settled.** I still have children who are going to school and I wish to support them to a certain level at high school. I want to retire when I am finished paying their school fees. But if I retire now I might find it difficult to cope with their school fees. If I retire I would not get the full salary but a gratuity. (Mr. Camarra, older Senior Master).

As already discussed Mrs. McIntre was equally frustrated with teaching and she also remained a teacher to ensure her pension.

**No, no, no I will not resign. I will stay until they tell me that they will pay me my pension.** I must find another thing to do. I haven't got a job I had better go for a business trip. (Mrs. McIntre).

Both Mr. Camarra and Mrs. McIntre were waiting to resign. They would do so when the first available opportunity arose in which their pension rights were ensured. Mr. Camarra reminded me of Beynon's (1985) research in which Mr. Pickwick described teaching as 'an irksome necessity'. I listened to an argument between Ms. Mansell, who as the Senior Mistress of Grade 6 occupied the most powerful position of any woman in Lamin School, and Mr. Camarra. Ms. Mansell accused Mr. Camarra of 'doing nothing' which, from my observations of Mr. Camarra appeared broadly correct. Mr. Camarra replied that he had 'done' his teaching earlier in his career and that he need not do anymore. For Mr. Camarra coming to school each day to sit under the mangoe tree was 'an irksome necessity', a duty he performed to ensure he could pay his children's school fees and collect his full pension rights.

The above teachers highlighted that for them teaching was a career of 'last choice' (Mogami 1991) but was necessary to secure a reliable salary in the poor economic climate of The Gambia. Mrs. Mama Jammeh told me she didn't 'want to leave teaching because teaching is safe'. Despite reluctantly drifting into teaching it is important to note that all the above teachers had found different reasons for choosing to remain in teaching. These reasons included dissatisfaction with other careers; lack of alternative work and other career plans not coming to fruition; the salary and the pension and the recent improvement in teacher's conditions.

In complete contrast to the teachers described above, for the following teachers, teaching was actively their *first* choice of job.

### ***10.3 Teaching was a Career of First Choice: (i) 'I Chose Teaching Because of My Father's Advice' (Master); The Encouragement of Relatives to Become a Teacher***

In Ireland, Sugrue (1996) found that the influence of an immediate relative played a decisive role in some student teachers' decisions to apply to primary teaching. Similarly in The Gambia the encouragement of relatives to become a teacher was an important reason for Master, Kawsu and Ms. Mansell initially joining the profession. Kawsu Sillah's father encouraged and expected him to become a teacher. His father was a wealthy land owning marabout. A marabout is a

knowledgeable Islamic man whose services include traditional healing practices for which people pay. Kawsu Sillah also carried out these practices and lived in a comfortable house which I visited on several occasions. Thus Kawsu was not totally dependent upon his teaching salary. At Kawsu's request I sat in on several of his Gambian history lessons. Kawsu was an energetic and enthusiastic teacher who was passionately interested in his subject. Consequently the children gave him their complete attention in class.

**K.S.; Teaching was my first choice.** Well I opted for teaching by myself. Because my father was a teacher, a Koranic teacher, so perhaps I inherited it from him.

**G.P.R-H;** Have you ever thought of leaving the teaching profession?

**K.S;** No, no, no. **I maintain the desire to remain in the teaching field until my death.** I can do them simultaneously. My father was doing it. He was teacher and a Marabout. He has just retired. He was a teacher at Brikama Junior Secondary School and St. Peters High School. I want to teach and be a marabout alongside it. I want to stay a teacher for the rest of my life. It is my desire to do that. **It's where I feel comfortable. I want to stay a teacher throughout my life.** ( Kawsu Sillah).

In contrast to the teachers in the previous section Kawsu vigorously pursued teaching as his first career with his father's encouragement<sup>74</sup>. Kawsu was expected to copy what his father had done, be a successful teacher and a marabout. At this early stage in Kawsu's career he expected to remain a teacher throughout his life. During the course of the research he certainly showed every

sign that he might do so. In the last week of the autumn term when many teachers had finished teaching, Kawsu organized rehearsals and plays in his classroom for the older children. Whenever tourists came to the school Kawsu showed them his classroom and children and zealously took the tourists around the school. Kawsu enthusiastically engaged in debate with other teachers in the school over a range of issues.

Master's father, by telling Master the careers he should not pursue, guided Master towards the teaching profession.

My father used to tell me when I was going to school that there are certain categories of job which I don't want you to do. He did not want me be involved with Banks and Credit Unions; Customs; politics and the Local Treasury. He gave me these jobs which he did not want me to do. I had this vow with my father and whether he is alive or not I would just continue to respect that. **So I chose teaching because of my father's advice.** I also really admired my teachers at school.  
**(Master)**

Master, like Kawsu, had tremendous respect for his father and adhered to his father's words of advice. When Master's father died Master had to leave his recently acquired senior post in one school to return home and support his family. The teaching post he transferred to in his home village was a lower position. Master's life history of leaving a senior position for a lower position because of his father's death illustrates Evetts (1996) thesis of the connections between careers and private lives. Deem's (1996;14) contention that teachers' careers are rarely

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<sup>74</sup> I suspect that his father *expected* Kawsu to become a teacher and what was expected by his father tended to be done by Kawsu. When discussing issues with Kawsu's father I noted that

linear' is also highlighted by Master's inadvertent and unfortunate transfer to a lower grade in a different school.

In a similar way to Master, Ms. Mansell was inspired to teach by a relative, in her case a brother. Ms. Mansell held the highest position of any female in Lamin school. Interestingly she was the Senior Mistress of the six Class Sixes who all had male teachers. She was a powerful and experienced teacher. She told me that she found no problem in managing her male teachers. Ms. Mansell often worked with Master in his office. She was respected and trusted by Master.

Ms. Mansell; I know it can be tedious but I just like teaching. I like it naturally. **I am a born teacher....**

I have an elder brother called Edward. He is now a headteacher at a High School. This brother was so kind and loving to me, I like him naturally. I do envy him. When I was in the Middle school in form 1, sometimes if he puts on a shirt I would buy the same colour in a dress. When he left the school and became a teacher I also did the same and followed him into the field. This is how I came into the teaching field....

I decided to continue with teaching and have it as a profession because I love it. The interaction with the kids for me is something very great. I like it naturally. Whenever I am traveling on holidays I take along a kid, just to take of. **I like children naturally.** In fact I baby sitted my three last younger brothers and sisters. I looked after them. I love kids.

It's not my intention to leave the profession. I want to further my education, get my Bed or masters or doctorate. **But I like this job. I am used to it now. I like the interactions between the kids and teachers so I am not going to change it.** (Mrs. Mansell).

Ms. Mansell enjoyed teaching and was pleased that she had chosen it. Indeed she felt as if she was a 'born' teacher and like Kawsu had no intention of leaving

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Kawsu sat on the floor at his father's feet.

teaching. She 'naturally' enjoyed working with children and teachers. Teaching for Ms. Mansell was a *vocation* rather than just a job (Cole in Ball and Goodson 1985).

#### **10.4 (ii) 'When I was a Child I Loved My Teachers: Teachers' Admiration for their childhood teachers**

Mrs. Faal a qualified teacher of four years experience, Mrs. Baldeh a Senior Mistress of twenty years experience and Mrs. Jammeh a qualified teacher with twelve years experience, had unequivocally chosen to teach. A common theme which arose amongst these teachers was their respect and admiration for their childhood teachers. Similary Knowles (1989;129) found that student teachers were inspired to become teachers because of their teachers when they were children.

**I really enjoy being a teacher. As a child I respected my teachers and always wanted to be one. Since I left school I decided to be a teacher. I am very interested in teaching. (Amie-Sey Faal)**

**Teaching was my first choice of profession. Since I was a child I have wanted to be a teacher. I have never thought of leaving the teaching profession. I will stay a teacher until my pension time. (Mrs. Baldeh)**

G.P.R-H; Is teaching your first of profession?

Mrs. Jammeh; Yes since I was going to school. I like to be a teacher, I admired my teachers when I was going to school. I



just admired the way they taught in the classroom. I say I want to be a teacher. Some will say they want to be a doctor & so on. From there I keep on trying to like teaching.

G.P.R-H; Why did you admire you teachers?

Mrs. Jammeh; Well I just like it, I like the job. Its just my feeling. I just like it since I was a child. I liked my teachers. I *loved* my teachers in those days. So I said one day when I grow up I will want to be a teacher. That was my first job and that's what I am doing till now. Teaching is my *life-partner*.  
(Mrs. Jammeh).

These teachers clearly admired and respected their teachers when they were girls at school. Mrs. Jammeh and Mrs. Faal wanted to copy their childhood teachers who acted as role models for the profession. Mrs. Jammeh professed to have 'loved' her teachers. Mrs. Jammeh and Mrs. Faal had decided to become teachers even before they had left school as pupils. Mrs. Baldeh intended to stay working as a teacher until her retirement and for Mrs. Jammeh teaching was her 'life partner'.

In the following sections I examine why both groups of teachers, those who had not wished to become teachers and those who had actively chosen the profession, felt that being a teacher was a worthwhile profession. During the teachers' interviews the following major themes emerged from both groups of teachers: their feelings about their salaries and teaching as a means of self-improvement.

### **10.5 Qualified Teachers Feelings about their Salaries**

Concerning Gambian teachers' salaries the General Secretary of the Gambia Teachers' Union told me the following interesting generalised information with which my specific findings from Lamin school concurred.

**'There is a general satisfaction amongst qualified teachers with their salaries. In fact comparatively it is the best in the sub-region of West Africa. Yes, their salaries are the best in the sub-region. For qualified teachers we have the best salaries. However we have the worst salary for unqualified teachers in the sub-region..... The teacher's salary has been linked to the civil service pay scale ever since colonial times. Teachers have always been part of the civil service colonial system and this transferred to the post-colonial period.'**  
(General Secretary of the Gambia Teachers' Union).

Salary contentment is closely linked with general job satisfaction and can offset other areas of working life which are frustrating (Webb in Ball and Goodson 1985;80). Teachers compare their salaries to Civil Servants (Chivore 1986). The fact that teachers' grades and salaries were the same as and sometimes better than civil servants encouraged Lamin's teachers. (see Appendix 2). The qualified teachers whom I interviewed were generally content with teaching and their contentment may in part be attributable to their satisfaction with their salaries.

In the following interviews with Mr. Bah, Amie Sey-Faal, Sunta Jawo and Mrs. Baldeh five main reasons were given for satisfaction with their salaries. Qualified teachers felt contented with their salaries for a number of reasons. Firstly, they stated that when they had begun teaching as unqualified teachers their salary was poor and that now as qualified teachers it was relatively good. Secondly, teachers were contented with their salary because it was linked with the Civil Service pay scales. Teachers could compare themselves and their life styles with Civil Servants. Thirdly, upon qualification a newly trained teacher entered the Civil Service pay scale at Grade 6 which was a higher grade than other Government jobs. A qualified teacher's salary was approximately 1,500 dalasais a month (100 pounds) depending upon experience<sup>75</sup>. Fourthly these teachers were aware that they were the best paid teachers in the sub-region of West Africa (UNESCO 1993; Richards 1995). I met a Nigerian physics post-graduate holder working in a rural Gambian High School. He said that the salary was better in The Gambia than in Nigeria<sup>76</sup>. Fifthly the payment of the teachers' salaries was usually timely and regular.

G.P.R-H; What do you think of a teacher's salary?

**Mr. Bah;** Well human beings are never satisfied with how much they get. But for most teachers their income is reasonable.

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<sup>75</sup> Master got paid approximately D3000 per month (200 pounds), qualified teachers D1,500 per month (100 pounds) and unqualified teachers D600 per month (40 pounds).

<sup>76</sup> Awanbor (1996:8) notes that in Nigeria the teaching profession is 'no longer an enviable profession since it has been mutilated by both economic and social forces. He states that the Nigerian government sometimes withholds and delays teachers' salaries by up to four months.

Compared to others in the Civil Service. If a teacher can manage his or her income properly well it is reasonable. When you newly leave College you are paid Grade 6 & that is upwards of D1000. Compared to other newly qualified civil servants very few will get that Grade.

Teaching has been linked to the Civil Service Pay scale for a number of years now. Yes and look at teachers from other countries coming here. **Teachers' income is better here than in other countries.**

G.P.R-H; So you are fairly comfortable with your salary?

Mr. Bah; I will stay with the profession. My plan at the moment is to be with the profession up to my retirement. Then I will take my retirement quietly & look for a comfortable country home somewhere & be a farmer to my death. Maybe at 50 I will quit. I have no intention of quitting before retirement unless circumstances change. If I changed now I would have to start from scratch.

(Mr. Bah)

G.P.R-H; How do you feel about your salary?

Mrs. Faal; If you are qualified you have a better salary but if you are not the salary is not so good....because I am qualified I earn money now. I am enjoying more than when I was an unqualified teacher.

**Amie Sey-Faal**

G.P.R-H; What do you think of teachers' salaries?

Mrs. Jawo; **Teachers are doing very well now. In the whole Civil Service people are saying that teachers are earning more than others! Teachers are earning more salary than others. We are really enjoying. As far as you are qualified anyway. Yes we are having a lot of money. I am on the last point of Grade 6 (D1,429). Yes when you are qualified only you will earn good salary. Unqualified teachers as for them they are not enjoying because they earn little. As far as you are qualified you will earn a lot of money. This government is doing well.**

**Sunta Jawo**

G.P.R-H: How do you find the teacher's salary?

Mrs. Baldeh: Oh it is comfortable as a qualified teacher. Yes because I started as a unqualified teacher when it was just a

meagre number of Dalasais. I was able to manage with that. So now I am qualified I am enjoying.

**Mrs. Baldeh**

These qualified professional teachers were 'enjoying' their salaries. This knowledge is crucial since I believe their salary contentment is one factor which underpins teachers sense of being valued and respected by the Government and their community. It must be noted however that unqualified teachers, whose salary was significantly less than qualified teachers, also felt valued and respected by Government and their community.

Mr. Jatta, the qualified deputy headteacher, however believed that teachers' salaries were too low. Nevertheless he stated that 'he loved the job'.

**Mr. Jatta;** I think that teachers are doing a wonderful job in this country, but they are not happy since their salary is very low. I'll be fifty next year, my Silver Jubilee!!! I am not in the profession because of the coins but because I love the profession otherwise I would have gone a long time ago..... Today I should own a very good compound and perhaps a car. But right now I live in a mud house. Terrible.

Mr. Jatta was similar to Nias' interviewees who:

'...frequently and cogently expressed dissatisfaction with the status and conditions of teaching as a career. Yet levels of satisfaction with teaching as an occupation were extremely high' (Nias 1988: 206).

Mr. Jatta lived with the contradiction of enjoying the work of teaching but constantly mentioned leaving the profession if he could (Nias 1988).

### ***10.6 (i) Additional Afternoon Salary for Qualified Teachers in Grades Five and Six***

In Chapter Two I discussed the structural bottleneck of too few Junior Secondary School places for the primary leavers. Hence there was intense pressure upon the children in Grades 5 and 6 to pass the Primary School Leaving Certificate. Thus each afternoon Grades Five and Six stayed until 4.00pm to do extra lessons in preparation for their Primary School Leaving Certificate (PSLC) which they needed to pass to enter Junior Secondary School. These afternoon exam classes were in effect private lessons since the parents directly paid the teachers. The parents would only employ qualified teachers in this manner. Each parent paid approximately D10 a month for a child to attend. Hence with perhaps on average 30 children in a class taking these extra lessons, the teacher earned around D300 per month on top of their regular salary. This provided a valuable extra source of income for the qualified Class 5 and 6 teachers. There was some confusion amongst the teachers as to whether or not it was now illegal to teach private lessons in a state school.

In the following section I examine the feelings of unqualified teachers about their status and salaries. As expected for teachers who received the worst salaries in West Africa (GTU 1995), they were most frustrated. These unqualified and thus unprofessional teachers, who earned approximately 600 dalasais a month, half of

their qualified colleagues' salaries, painted a very different picture from their qualified, professional colleagues. However, interestingly the unqualified teachers still stated that they enjoyed teaching.

### ***10.7 Unqualified and thus Unprofessional; Unqualified Teachers Feelings about their Status and Salary***

In Chapter Five I discussed how state teacher training was a prerequisite for professional status (Goodson and Hargreaves 1996). In the following interview with Mr. Gassama, an unqualified teacher, his lack of training and thus professional status was made apparent.

As an unqualified teacher how do you feel?

I don't feel good. I want to be qualified because I know many of the qualified teachers and what they can do, I can do it. With all their qualifications what they can do I can also do it. But I am an unqualified teacher so I am not a professional teacher. Without the qualification I am not officially recognised as a professional teacher.

Really it is very good as a teacher. It is just that I have to get my qualification and then I will be much more financially comfortable. I can't get married until I am qualified! I must have the money.

**Mr. Gassama**

Mr. Gassama felt that he could do everything that a qualified professional teacher could do. However without his professional training and qualification, Mr. Gassama did not perceive himself as a professional teacher. To be a

professional teacher he knew that he must gain his qualification. Mr. Gassama told me that he had attempted to get into The Gambia College on four different occasions to secure his teacher training but had been disappointed each time. As described in Chapter Seven there were many more applications to The Gambia College than there were places. Mr. Gassama said that on two occasions he had been teaching up-country and his application was late because of the post but that he was angry that he was not accepted on his other attempts.

Mr. Gassama felt frustrated that although he was doing the equivalent job of his qualified colleagues he was nevertheless paid half their salary. His unqualified teacher's salary did not allow him to marry, since in Gambian society the groom is expected to pay for all the wedding festivities. Given this situation it was remarkable that he stated 'teaching is very good'. Living with the contradiction of enjoying teaching but constantly feeling frustrated by the income was a common theme amongst Nias' teachers in the UK (Nias 1988).

In following sections I examine why Mr. Gassama felt that teaching was a 'very good' job despite his poor salary. He stated that the hope and expectation of becoming qualified and thus receiving a higher salary motivated Mr. Gassama to stay in the profession alongside the more esoteric aspects of nationalism, community development and community respect.

Imran, a female unqualified teacher, developed on the problems of a small salary.



G.P.R-H; What do you think of the unqualified teacher's salary?

Imran; **The salary is not very much.** I have a big family now, six children & some of them are going to the high school. My husband is a Senior Master and he pays their school fees. My small salary of D500 helps the younger ones. This is my 11th year of being an unqualified teacher. It is too long. If Jammeh had been in power all along I would be qualified by now. I have been trying to do the up-grading course but each year I am pregnant so I can't do it when it is on in the holidays.

I want to stay in the teaching profession but I want to be qualified so I can enjoy the qualified salary. It is better than sitting at home. That D500 helps to solve some small problems in the house. We need it. We also have a small shop at home which I run when I'm not here. I use that money to pay the small children's study fees & the darra Islamic school. We also have some houses for rent in our compound.

**Imran**

Imran felt sure that if Jammeh had been in power earlier then she would have been upgraded to qualified status by now. She had not been able to upgrade to qualified status in the summer holidays because she was pregnant. As an unqualified teacher she relied upon her husband's salary to pay the children's school fees. However, unlike the qualified teachers for whom secondary sources of income were perhaps not so pressing because their salaries were reasonable, Imran mentioned the secondary jobs which she undertook outside of teaching. In addition to teaching Imran ran a small shop and rented other houses on her compound. From the personal experience of using a tailor I found out that Mrs. Jawo owned the tailor's shop. If other teachers were involved in business enterprises they were not discussed with me, perhaps because the teachers believed I would pass judgment upon such activities and inform Master. It was

possible that because of the relatively high salaries paid to teachers in The Gambia that there was little need for teachers' to have other business ventures<sup>77</sup>.

### **10.8 Teaching as a means of learning new ideas**

Nias (1989) notes that teachers felt they; 'learnt new things' from the subject and the children; were personally extended and learnt how to solve problems; were intellectually stimulated and achieved personal recognition from teaching. Nias' interviewees most frequently mentioned that 'planning' was the area of teaching from which they learnt most new ideas. Thus teaching for them was meeting 'personal intellectual needs'. My findings below in The Gambia concur with Nias'. Mrs. Baldeh, Mrs. Jammeh and Mr. Gassama described how development of their personal knowledge had empowered them.

G.P.R-H; Do you enjoy being a teacher?

**Mrs. Baldeh;** Yes, I am enjoying it because you will have a lot of experience & you will keep on learning everyday. Learning from the kids, learning from your colleagues. **If you want to improve maybe being a teacher is the best job.** Maybe in other professions you cannot improve yourself, but as a teacher you can improve yourself because you keep on learning a lot, reading a lot doing research so that you will be comfortable with your class.

G.P.R-H; So you develop yourself as a teacher?

**Mrs. Baldeh;** If you want to be a good teacher & a successful teacher you have to develop yourself & keep on learning. **As a teacher you are engaged in learning and reading material for your lessons and hence improving yourself.** Teaching and

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<sup>77</sup> Some teachers farm in the rainy season.

learning go hand in hand. Even children can tell you something that you didn't know before. We make trips like to the Fire Service, the police station & learn something. We also make trips around the country. (Mrs. Baldeh)

**imran; Every day I come to school & learn new things and improve myself. When I go for training I learn a lot. I improve a lot. I develop more. I enjoy that. I really enjoy that. Well, nowadays teaching is very good. You learn everyday, new words and new things. So I improve a lot.**

G.P.R-H; How do you find being a teacher?

**Mr. Gassama; It is very very interesting. It is very educative. As a teacher you always learn. New things everytime so it is very interesting. It improves your skill. When you are a teacher you do research and this improves you all the time. So by doing this you are learning.**

These teachers mentioned to me that their work as teachers improved their *own* education. These teachers enjoyed the work of teaching because the research, preparation and reflection increased their knowledge. Knowledge was a powerful commodity in The Gambia where few people had formal education beyond middle school. (In Chapter Eight I discuss the theme of being educated and thus a knowledgeable person which gave teachers respect in their community). Mr. Gassama and Imran were unqualified teachers and hence had only received four years of post-primary education in a Junior Secondary School. Mrs. Jammeh had obtained her qualification at up-grading courses during summer vacations. Mrs. Baldeh was the only one amongst these teachers who had been to The Gambia College and thus benefited from higher education. Thus these teachers were very keen to improve upon their education

and saw the processes of researching and teaching as a self educative one from which they benefited<sup>78</sup>.

The second part of this chapter is concerned with the experiences of being a *female* teacher. I have given the experiences of being a female teacher its own section because the experiences are different from those of male teachers (Acker 1989; Skelton and Hanson 1989; Lacey 1977; Evetts 1989; 1994;1996; De Lyon and Migniulo 1989).

### ***Part Two: Being a Female teacher at Lamin School;***

#### ***10.9 Prevailing Gambian Ideologies Concerning Women and Childcare***

Mrs. Jawo and Mrs. Baldeh felt they were 'natural' teachers by virtue of their female gender.

G.P.R-H; How do you feel as a female teacher?

Mrs. Baldeh; **It is a comfortable job as far as I am a woman. As far as I am a mother. I think it is the best profession for me because mothers are always teachers. I can manage the kids at home & in the compound. Teaching is a very good job for a woman. As a female teacher you have more time than any other job to stay with your family. Teaching is from 8.00 to 2.00 and you have more time to spend with your family.....**

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<sup>78</sup> When I mentioned to Master the possibility of the charity BookAid sending books to Lamin School for a children's library, Master told me that it was the teachers and not the children who would benefit from any book donation. Master explained that non-fiction books are such a scarcity in The Gambia that the teachers would monopolise access to the library.

**Women are born teachers.. So it means I am a teacher. Even if it was not my profession I would be a teacher. Whether educated or not I am a teacher.**

(Mrs. Baldeh).

**Mrs. Jawo; We the female teachers have more patience than male teachers. We don't try to beat them. That's why we are mostly posted to these small classes 1,2 and 3. Male teachers are always angry & they have no patience. They have to teach the older children.**

They argued that they act as 'nurturers' of young children both at home and at school. Indeed Mrs. Baldeh went so far as to negate her professional teaching qualification, and argued that on the basis of her gender alone she was a teacher. In so doing she lived up to cultural stereotypes that women should be mothers and nurters first and thereby are capable of teaching young children<sup>79</sup>. Mrs. Baldeh's justification that teaching was a good job for a woman because the hours suited looking after a family, bears remarkable resemblance to Acker's critique of prevailing UK ideologies.

'Teaching is thought as an appropriate- perhaps even 'the best' - career for women, the best paid and the highest status of the traditionally female professions, with holidays and hours that allow combined responsibilities in work and family contexts' (Acker 1989:1).

Mrs. Jawo and Mr. Bah believed that women taught the lower age range of children because women were not angry and thus did not beat children. Mrs.

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<sup>79</sup>These Gambian ideologies concerning female teachers as 'born' teachers by virtue of their gender alone are similar to UK ideologies on female teachers (Acker 1989; Evetts 1989). See Chapter Two.

Bojang, however, beat her children so severely that other teachers who were around her class called out to her to desist the beating<sup>80</sup>. Thus Mrs. Jawo's belief that women should teach the lower ages because they had more patience than men was a teacher 'myth' (Day;1993).

The female teachers' agreement with prevailing Gambian ideologies of the 'mother as teacher' had the effect of keeping the female teachers working with the lower age range of children (see section below). I was told that teaching the lower age range was less 'respected' than working with older children<sup>81</sup>. It is possible for those female teachers, within The Gambian context of few alternative professional jobs, that acquiescence to sexist ideologies created a space for women teachers. Reciting stereotypic ideologies *may* have helped female teachers to defend their positions as teachers in a highly competitive job market with few other alternatives to teaching. In the following section I describe how a female teachers' salary enables her to employ domestic workers whilst she is teaching.

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<sup>80</sup> Physical punishment was officially banned in Gambian schools in 1990. However physical punishment still widely occurs. Children at Lamin school who were naughty were publicly caned after the Friday school assembly. The teachers knew that Westerners tended not to approve of physical punishment hence the teacher whose turn it was to administer the beatings hid the stick behind his back and I pretended not to notice what was going on.

<sup>81</sup> Aspinwall and Drummound (1989;193) note that the prevailing sexist ideology discourages female teachers from applying to the 'more prestigious and higher paid junior and primary positions'.

### **10.10 A teaching salary enabled female teachers to employ domestic workers**

In The Gambia domestic duties, such as shopping, collecting water, cooking, cleaning and childcare are perceived as female activities (Kea 1998). In a large compound these domestic duties are time consuming. These activities are still a woman's responsibility even if the woman goes out to work. Thus female Gambians, who were in monthly salaried employment, such as teaching, tended to employ domestic workers in their compounds whilst they were teaching (Kea 1998). These domestic servants were usually Jola young women, who were migrants from South Senegal<sup>82</sup>.

**Mrs. Bojang; Here in Africa we female teachers have maids to look after everything in the compounds whilst we are teaching. And as leader of the family that is important.**

**Imran; Female teachers have to take responsibility in the home & in your job. You have to take care of the family, do the cooking, cleaning and looking after the house and then you come to work. But I have a maid who helps.**

Thus because of their monthly salary, female Gambian teachers were powerfully positioned. Nonetheless it was women who were expected to hire and supervise domestic workers because of the Gambian ideologies of women as

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<sup>82</sup> The female teachers told me that they paid their domestic workers, who usually lived in the compounds, about D200 per month (about a seventh of a qualified teacher's salary). This is good value considering all that is required of them, cooking, cleaning, childcare and so on.

nurters at home. In the next section I describe the effects of these ideologies upon the career structure of Lamin's female teachers.

### ***10.11 Female teachers predominately teach younger children and are located within lower career positions***

Male and female teachers are physically divided in Lamin school. I did not ask whether this was deliberate or not. The younger children, aged seven to ten, whose classes were situated to the left of Master's office, were predominately taught by female teachers. It was interesting to note that the only men who taught the younger children were *unqualified*. In contrast the older children, aged ten to thirteen, whose classes were located to the right of Master's office, were predominately taught by male teachers. The age of child taught is important because teachers' career chances differ according to the age level they teach (Acker 1989). The older the age taught the more likely promotion will be given (Aspinwall and Drummound 1989). The female teachers, who largely taught the younger children, did not benefit from the added financial advantage of private afternoon lessons (see earlier in this chapter). This additional income went to the male teachers who taught the older children.

Acker notes

'Women constitute most of the infant teachers and as we go up the age range, both their representation in the teaching force and their access to managment positions diminish' (Acker 1989;1).



Twenty nine out of forty nine Lamin School teachers are female. (This is higher than the national average of 31% for female teachers in primary schools (GTU 1995;10). This is because Lamin school is located within an urban context)<sup>83</sup>. Thus even though a majority of the teachers at Lamin School are women, only two women, Mrs. Baldeh and Ms. Mansell are in are in mangement positions.

#### ***10.12 The female teachers' and the male teachers' took their breaks in different parts of the school***

During teaching breaks, the female teachers who taught the younger aged children on one side of the school compound sat together and the male teachers who taught the older children sat together on the other side of the school compound. This was partly because there was no staff room at the school and partly because the school compound was so large and hot, thus preventing the teachers from easily mixing. I was invited to sit with the female teachers and we talked together. Thus the *predominately* female Grade One, Two and Three teachers sat together under the large mangoe tree whilst the largely male Grade Four, Five and Six Grade teachers sat together under the shady overhang of their classrooms' roofs.

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<sup>83</sup> More girls in urban areas are educated and who then may go on to become teachers (see Chapter Six).

The female teachers acted as a 'reference group' (Nias 1989; see Chapter Two). During their breaks there was a lot of talk amongst the dozen or so women who sat under the mangoe tree. Referring to UK female teachers Evetts notes:

'There was a very real sense of community amongst these women that had existed when as teacher-mothers they had shared difficulties, experiences and solutions with other women teachers' (Evetts 1989;34).

The enthusiastic interactions and discussions amongst the women testified to their sense of community. Membership of such an 'occupational community' or teacher network is important in helping female teachers to achieve promotion (Evetts 1989). In the following section I discuss the female teachers' experiences of the promotion system.

### ***10.13 Female Teachers and promotion***

The female teachers whom I interviewed differed in their opinions about women's chances of promotion. Mrs. Jawo and Mrs. Baldeh stated that women and men had the same chances of promotion. They were in agreement with the Gambia Teachers' Union who found that 72% of teachers believed that there was equal opportunity for male and female teachers (GTU 1995;39).

**We have the same opportunities as men. We have female senior mistresses, deputies and headteachers and a female Minister! Throughout my career it has been very fair because I**

earn the same salary as my colleagues. Whenever there are vacancies men and women can apply.

(Mrs. Jawo).

G.P.R-H; If you were promoted to be a Headteacher of somewhere on the Northbank could you go & do that?

Mrs. Baldeh; **Yes I am a born citizen of The Gambia. I have to go for my country.**

G.P.R-H; What would your husband say?

Mrs. Baldeh; He would not say anything. I have to have a meeting & come to terms. It would be possible. You see if I am posted somewhere remote I will teach there. I have 5 children & my sisters and mother would look after the children. My husband would agree.

(Mrs. Baldeh).

Mrs. Jawo believed that the promotion opportunities for both men and women were the same. This belief had been recently reinforced by the promotion of a female headteacher to the Minister of Education. In Mrs. Jawo's teaching career of twenty years she stated that she had always been paid the same as men. Interestingly Mrs. Baldeh's first reaction to my question about promotion was to invoke a nationalist discourse of duty to her country. Mrs. Baldeh felt that if she were given promotion to a remote location such as the Northbank of the river Gambia then she would discuss the promotion with her husband and take up the post. Mrs. Baldeh lived with her mother and five of her sisters and they could look after her children. Thus the extended family network allowed Mrs. Baldeh geographical freedom in her promotion opportunities.

It is also important to note that Mrs. Baldeh is originally from the remote Northbank and thus may have felt comfortable locating there.

Mrs. McIntre and Imran disagreed with Mrs. Baldeh and Mrs. Jawo concerning women teachers' chances of promotion. They felt that as women they stood less chances of promotion than their male colleagues.

Imran; **It is very difficult as a woman to be promoted**

Mrs. McIntre; **Male teachers get the promotions and if they are posted they are supposed to go. But us women teachers we are having our families. We cannot just leave the children & go up-country. Who would after the little children? The male teachers can just go & leave the family with their wives but for women we haven't got that. My husband wouldn't allow me the promotion to a rural place.**

The prevailing ideologies concerning women as mothers, discussed earlier, constrained Mrs. McIntre's promotion opportunities. Thus, unlike her male colleagues, because of her *additional* role as a mother, she could not take a promotion up-country where she would not be with their children. In addition female teachers, who tend to be married and have children, are reluctant to be posted up-country to rural areas where conditions and services are poorer. Master informed me that the Government was reluctant to post women up-country because it was 'not appropriate' for women to live on their own, since this might bring their reputation into disrepute. Thus my findings concerning women teachers and their careers are in agreement with Evetts.

'In general, married women primary teachers are not as mobile as men primary teachers. Few married women will be willing or able to move their families to develop their own careers...Geographical mobility may be a significant gender difference, therefore, in the career strategies of men and women primary teachers' (1994;45).

It is important to note however that, because of the extended family system and because of her connections up-country, Mrs. Baldeh would move up-country to further her career. In the next section I discuss Mrs. Baldeh's teaching career which began in her home village.

#### ***10.14 Mrs. Baldeh's teaching career***

Mrs. Baldeh explained how she had been born in rural Gambia and had used her education for self-advancement (financial and an improved education). Crucially Mrs. Baldeh wanted to act as a role model for girls and women in her home town so as to encourage them. She was a 'committed' teacher who chose teaching because she passionately wanted 'to improve the life-chances of children', particularly girls (Nias 1989;32).

G.P.R-H; How do you feel about being a female teacher?

Mrs. Baldeh; **Being a female teacher I am very proud of it. Especially when I think of my home. I was the first from our family to be a female teacher.** And now you have a good number of female graduates from our home and female teachers too. Some of them are at the College right now training to become teachers. So I can say that I have done something there.

G.P.R-H; What do you mean?

**Mrs. Baldeh; I was the first person, male or female to complete school in my family I was like an experiment and my parents wanted to see what the results were and now they are proud. My father asked me whether I would be able to teach in my village school & I said why not. I have to. So I said let me go under my parents & teach. I am very proud to be the first female teacher in my home town.**

**G.P.R-H; Why were you so proud?**

**Mrs. Baldeh; I taught there at my home school. I went to school with so many girls and they were all withdrawn. It was said that Western education has no use. So after I decided to become a teacher and did my PTC I decided to be posted there so that the women would see & know that it was possible. So most of the parents were motivated & they started taking their female kids to school. Because most of their female kids are taken to school & then they are withdrawn. When I was teaching there my former classmates started taking their female children to the school. When we were going to school people thought that if you educate a woman that is nothing. You see all my sisters were educated up to Grade 6 but they were withdrawn. I was proud to go to Senior Secondary School. Now I give some of my income to my parents because they were taking care of me when I was growing up. You see wherever I go I will be able to educate my female society. Women need to be educated here and I will not rest until they are educated. Gambian women are lacking behind and need to be educated. You know even here in Brikama we are not just to teach the kids and go home. We, the female teachers, are to educate the women who did not get the privilege to go to school.**

**(Mrs. Baldeh).**

Mrs. Baldeh stated that she chose to be a teacher in order to act as a role model for her girl pupils, her sisters and the women from her rural village home. She had dedicated her life and her teaching to educating girls in the hope of empowering Gambian women. She was 'very proud' of this role she had created for herself. She realised she was unique as she was an educated woman from the rural areas. Interestingly when she returned to teach there she

stayed with her parents thereby supporting the fact that those female teachers who work up-country tend to be from the region. I was convinced by her desire to act as a positive female role model because as a Senior Mistress responsible for the Grade 4 classes, she worked hard at guiding and encouraging the teachers under her supervision<sup>84</sup>.

### ***Conclusion***

The men's and women's 'voices' in this chapter speak of the diversity of reasons for joining and staying in the teaching profession, their present enjoyment or otherwise of teaching, and their satisfaction and dissatisfaction with a teacher's salary. I have examined some of the different teaching experiences of women in Lamin school. This chapter's findings are important because one of the objectives of the thesis is to reflect upon the differences between Gambian teachers. These differences add to the complexities of our understanding about what it is to be a Gambian teacher.

My findings are in agreement with Nias' thesis which states that primary teaching involves 'inexorably living with tension' (Nias 1988;212). Mr. Jatta, Mr. Bah, Mr. Gassamma and Mrs. McIntre had all considered giving up teaching at various points in their career because they were frustrated with the conditions of teaching. Nevertheless they remained in teaching because 'they loved the job'.

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<sup>84</sup> I listened to a heated argument between Mrs. Baldeh and Mr. Camarra. Mr. Camarra stated that if he chose, he could 'beat' one of his wives and throw her out of the compound. Mrs.

Thus for these Gambian teachers 'living with paradox' was an essential part of their daily lived experiences (Nias 1988).

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Baldeh vociferously argued against Mr. Camarra's violent sexist remarks.



## **Chapter Eleven:**

### ***Lamin School Teachers' Perceptions of their Profession***

#### ***Introduction***

In this chapter I examine teachers' perceptions of their profession and the ways in which 'they think about themselves as teachers'<sup>85</sup> (Knowles 1989;99). The first part of this chapter attempts to sketch out a 'corporate self-image' of Lamin school teachers (Nias 1989;29). Teachers' perceptions of their work influence their morale and dedication to their profession (Hargreaves and Goodson 1996). Many of Lamin's teachers revealed that they felt good about themselves because they felt that teaching was a worthwhile profession. Similarly Nias' teachers had a high 'self esteem which generated enthusiasm for their work' (Nias 1988; 206).

This Chapter is divided into two parts: Part A concerns *Teachers' Perceptions of their profession* and Part B concerns *Promotions* a major source of frustration for the teachers. The first section of Part A is concerned with two major discourses operating within the school, *Nationalism and Islam*. Nationalism and Islam provide a powerful motivator and professional 'sense of self' (Nias 1989) for teachers' work and is described in the section entitled '*It's a duty to Develop my Beloved Country*'. The second section is concerned with the *Community Respect for*

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<sup>85</sup> Knowles (1989;99) notes that teacher role identity is the way individuals think about themselves as teachers -the images they have as self-as-teacher'.

*Teachers' Nationalistic Work.* The final section is entitled *Feeding from your Sweat; Teaching as a Noble Profession.* Here I examine the overlapping discourses of nationalism, islam, sacrifice and honesty which were considered an important part of Gambian teachers' professionalism.

Concerning *Promotions*, some teachers were angry because they felt that whether or not they got promoted was entirely dependent upon whom they knew, rather than their teaching ability. This is discussed in the section entitled *'It's not what you know, but whom you know': Nepotism in the promotion system.* Master and Mr. Bah felt that this nepotism was slowly changing because of the new Government hence the third section *'Now it's more a question of merit and service' ; A Fairer Promotion System under the New Government?* In the final two sections of this part I examine those teachers who were privately pro-active in attempting to gain promotion whilst publically stating that their careers were in God's hands.

### **11.1 Part A: Teachers' Perceptions of their Profession: (i)Lamin School Assemblies: Nationalism and Islam**

Whilst reading this section the larger political context of increased nationalism should be noted. School assemblies set the philosophy and assumptions of a school's culture (Grace 1978). Hence as an ethnographer it was important that I observed and imbibed the atmosphere of Lamin's assemblies<sup>86</sup>. Assemblies were conducted in both Mandinka and English. The Mandinka was for the benefit of the Islamic teachers or *Oustases* who spoke little English. The dominant themes which pervaded the assemblies were Islam and nationalism.

An Outas led the assembly by chanting prayers in Arabic. Arabic is the holy language of the *Qur'an* (Sardar and Malik 1994). The whole school then followed, singing and chanting the Islamic prayers in Arabic. The prayers were to Allah asking him to bless their work and give them guidance. As an outsider it appeared to me as if the children and teachers sang and chanted their prayers with tremendous enthusiasm. I am sure that some teachers and children were more sincere in their prayers than others<sup>87</sup>. I was, however, struck by the

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<sup>86</sup> Due to lack of finance, Lamin school did not have a school hall in which the whole school congregated. Hence teachers and children stood in the hot sunshine in the playground outside the Class 6 classrooms. Writing this Chapter during a cold dark British winter it is easy to romanticise the heat of a winter Gambian morning. Sometimes winter temperatures in the sun at 9.00 am were 30 degrees. The average time for an assembly was thirty minutes. I found that after 15 minutes or so in the very hot sunshine I had to sit under the shelter of the Class 6 balcony. During the 'hot' summer season the assemblies must become akin to a physical endurance test for teachers and children alike.

<sup>87</sup> Whilst a lecturer at The Gambia College my maths colleague regularly came into my office to eat and drink during the fasting month of Ramadam. He carefully shut the door and sat behind the large bookcase which divided the room in two to ensure that nobody saw him.

tremendous sense of unity and purpose which these prayers appeared to give to the whole school.

The Deputy Head then generally delivered a short homily on particular human virtues which were to be espoused in the school. These homilies would often call upon the children's Gambian patriotism and love of Allah. Gambian national development and Islam were ever present in the life of Lamin School. The School Assembly would finish with the school singing the National Anthem. The teachers and children stood to attention with their hands by their sides and sung with great gusto. As a British citizen I felt that I too should show respect and deference to these symbols of Gambian pride and hence sung the National Anthem along with the teachers and children.

The end of school each day was heralded by the Oustas calling the school to prayer in Arabic. From 1.45 to 2.00 p.m. the teachers and children lined up and prepared for the 2.00pm Islamic prayers which lasted for about 10 minutes. It was humbling to see nearly 1,600 teachers and children bowed down in prayer and submission to Allah. Apart from the eleven Christian children, for whom a Christian teacher was employed, the whole school was unified in Islam.

## **11.2 (ii) 'It's a Duty to Develop my Beloved Country' (Mr. Kawsu Sillah): Gambian Teacher Nationalism**

Kawsu Sillah's desire for national development of 'his beloved country' was most marked. Kawsu's passionate longing was to eradicate Gambian poverty and illiteracy and to see The Gambia develop economically. Thus his motivation to teach was similar to many of Nias' teachers who

'saw themselves as people with a strong concern for the welfare of others; they wanted to improve the lives or life-chances of children' (Nias 1989;32).

I was struck by one of Kawsu's assemblies, the theme of which was that poverty is a crime. His class sung songs concerning the virtuous struggle against poverty. I felt that his desire for Gambian national development was sincere. Kawsu was 'politically committed to making the world a fairer place' (Nias 1989;32)

G.P.R-H; Why did you want to become a teacher?

Kawsu Sillah; Well I wanted to play my role in the socio-economic development of the country. I know that without education there will be no development & that education can only be achieved once you have good & very educated teachers. That's why I wanted my qualification so I could function effectively as a teacher.

G.P.R-H; How do you see the teacher's salary?

K.S; I feel the salary that I receive every month is average. I'm not looking for money. I'm looking for also how best I can work for the country. This is one way. I am contented because I am serving the nation.

G.P.R-H; What do you mean?

K.S; I am teaching children to become productive citizens of this nation.

G.P.R-H; Do you feel good about yourself as a teacher?

K.S; Exactly....I mean I have an obligation to my country. Every citizen, a patriot, has an obligation to his or her own country. In some way or another you have to engage on something productive. And I feel that teaching being a noble job, being a job trying to mould people to become very good citizens I am quite contented doing that.

G.P.R-H; Why do you think young Gambians should become teachers?

K.S; The whole world is crying out for literacy. To be inline with the hearts and minds of other peoples we have to eradicate illiteracy. **In The Gambia here there are so many foreigners in our educational system.** Gambians can also be trained to become teachers. I feel that more Gambians should register at Gambia College to become trained to become teachers. I am **nationalistic.** I want more Gambians to join the field and become teachers.

G.P.R-H; Is there anything else you want to say about teaching?

K.S; To encourage other Gambians to become teachers. **Teaching being a noble job.** Well I would advise young Gambians to enter the profession.

G.P.R-H; Why?

K.S; Because education is the backbone of everything. There can't be any meaningful living without education. It is through education that we can complete the socio-economic standards of the nation. **It is only through education that we can develop The Gambia.** So if we have more teachers in this service that we go a long way in that direction. If you look at our education here it is dominated by so many foreigners, Nigerians, Sierra Leoneans, & Ghanaian teachers. If we had more Gambians trained to become teachers that would go a long way in uplifting the socio-economic standards of Gambians.....

.....**All Gambians have to try to develop this beloved country into a paradise & hopefully we can do that.** We have this vision 2020 which if it becomes realised we will be better than

even America. Teachers are everything in this process. They teach the doctors, engineers and agriculturists. Teaching is a profession where you are just there to mould people to direct people. A teacher's role is compatible with any other profession. **All other professions need a teacher.**  
(Kawsu Sillah)

Kawsu Sillah felt that a national of *any* country has a patriotic 'obligation' to their country. Most interestingly for this thesis, Kawsu feels that it was working as a teacher that allowed him to be best placed to develop the Gambian nation. He claimed that he did not become a qualified teacher for the salary but because once qualified he would be more effective in the classroom and thus in the development of The Gambia. Kawsu believed that teachers were central to the economic objectives of Vision 2020. Vision 2020 is a Government objective by which time it is hoped that The Gambia will be economically developed.

Kawsu believed that teachers were central to the overall national development process because everybody, including politicians, doctors and farmers had been taught by a teacher. Thus all other professions were dependent upon the teaching profession. The appointment of President Jammeh's secondary school Headteacher to the position of Minister of Education underlined the point that teachers teach all members of the society including the President. This political appointment of a former headteacher to Minister was mentioned by several teachers as reflective of how important the teaching profession was.

Kawsu wished that more Gambians would become teachers so that the Gambian teaching profession would be less dominated by the more populous West African

states of Nigeria, Sierra Leone and Ghana. In common with other primary schools all of Lamin's teachers were Gambian nationals, however in secondary schools the situation is very different. 64% of secondary school teachers were other West African nationals mainly Sierra Leoneans, Ghanaians and Nigerians (The Ministry of Education 1995). It was to this situation in secondary schools that Kawsu referred.

One of the many complex reasons for this high number of foreign teachers is that there was an acute shortage of Gambian secondary school teachers. In 1995 there were only 60 secondary school teacher training places available a year at the Gambia College. Hence there were many unfilled teaching vacancies in Gambian secondary schools. In contrast Sierra Leone, Ghana and Nigeria had a surplus of secondary school teachers. Moreover because teaching salaries in The Gambia were linked to the Civil Service pay scales Gambian teachers' salaries were higher than in Sierra Leone, Ghana and Nigeria (Richards 1995). Thus other West African nationals represented a high proportion of secondary school teachers in The Gambia. In 1993 when I first arrived in The Gambia, the Jawarra Government was openly hostile to the large numbers of Sierra Leonean teachers in The Gambia. Sierra Leonean teachers were often not given the correct paper work for the right to work in The Gambia. In September 1993 many Sierra Leonean teachers were arrested for 'illegally' working in The Gambia. They were held in police stations throughout the country. As a result many secondary schools could not open at the start of the academic year in September.



Such state xenophobia was reflected by many Gambians that I spoke with (for example Kawsu's interview). Gambian newspapers sometimes blamed other West African nationals including Senegalese and Guinea Bisseans for thefts and public disorders. My bicycle theft was immediately blamed by the local police and the family we lived with, on 'a man from Guinea Bisseau' without any evidence.

Kawsu felt contented and happy as a teacher because he was fulfilling his patriotic duty of 'moulding Gambian children into productive citizens'. Interestingly Nias' teachers mentioned that they enjoyed 'moulding children' because they were convinced that they were making 'a valuable contribution to childrens' lives' (Nias 1989;92). Observing Kawsu teaching in the classroom and his general demeanor around the school certainly confirmed that he did indeed enjoy teaching. Kawsu was most active around the school and involved in many extra-curricular activities such as drama and the school vegetable garden. He had enormous enthusiasm and energy for teaching. I observed Kawsu teaching Gambian history. He was extremely knowledgeable in this area and passionately believed in the subject's importance. He taught in a didactic traditional 'chalk and talk' style positively and enthusiastically responding to the children's questions. Physically he moved around the classroom giving broad animated sweeps with his arms. Consequently the children and myself were engrossed and attentive when Kawsu taught. Kawsu's commitment to national development both inside and outside school coupled with his religious commitment made it easy for Kawsu 'to adopt the identity of teacher' (Nias 1989;197).

In the following interview Amie Sey-Faal described how she interpreted The Gambia as one small country in which teachers were central to national

development. According to Amie in this interview the reason that she was a teacher was to develop her country. Thus she was attracted to teaching in order to 'propagate or sustain deeply held social and humanitarian ideals' (Nias 1989;32).

**Teachers are central to Gambian national development. Teachers want to develop our country and that is why we teach. The Gambia is one small country and yes The Gambia is one big family. Gambia is a small country & most of us are relatives. We look after each other & take care of each other also. We have sympathy for each other. Most of the teachers here are Muslims too. Teachers pray for peace & stability in our country so that everything will go smoothly.... Teachers are known by people as helping Gambian children. (Amie Sey-Faal)**

Amie Sey-Faal presented me with a rather romanticised view of the complexities of Gambian society. In my experience not all Gambians 'looked after each other'. The Gambia has extremes of wealth and these extremes are sometimes found even within families. Nonetheless, this sentimental image of The Gambia as a small caring community in which teachers are pivotal was important for Amie's professional teaching image of herself. Amie claimed that it was because of The Gambia's smallness (physically and demographically The Gambia is small) that Gambians were able to work together towards national development. The local doctor, who ironically was Master's brother, told me that if a Gambian visited a stranger's house and looked at the stranger's photographs that it was *likely* that the visitor would recognise someone in the photographs. Furthermore I was told that The Gambia was comprised of ten large families.

Partly because of the smallness of The Gambia teachers such as Amie were able to directly appreciate the ways in which they were developing the nation. When

visiting schools with other Gambia College lecturers I was struck by the numbers of teachers, deputies, and heads that my colleagues knew. I believe that this constant reinforcement of my colleagues professional work gave them a tremendous sense of self. Similarly Master and Mr. Bah mentioned to me how proud they felt when they met their former pupils who now hold respectable and worthwhile jobs. Upon my return field trip to The Gambia in winter 1996/97 I traveled up-country to a holiday resort on the river Gambia. Part of the trip included a donkey cart ride from the main road to the resort. As we passed through a small village a young man called out and greeted me. He had been a student at The Gambia College whom I had taught. Former students of The Gambia College were teaching throughout the country and I frequently met with them. This personal experience showed me that in a small country such as The Gambia, it was easy to feel the development benefits of one's work. Concerning knowing people Master proudly told me the following,

**Sometimes I go to places where I think I am not known and people will just come. I am always surprised. I don't even remember them! I can go anywhere in this country and I will find somebody who can help me. Perhaps I was his Headmaster somewhere. (Master)**

Master was the childhood Headteacher of a Gambia College colleague who is my age. This demonstrates Master's experience and the number of people he has taught. Master was proud of the number of people who knew him as a Headteacher throughout the country.

Amie mentioned that most of the teachers at the school were Muslims and that they prayed for national unity and development. Hence her desire for national

development went beyond classroom teaching to include a spiritual realm. Thus Amie's whole person was dedicated towards the goal of national development.

For Amie and for other teachers religion and teaching went hand in hand, binding The Gambian nation together. Thus some teachers perceived themselves as being important not only in Gambian economic development but also in national *moral* social cohesion and order. The moral aspect of teaching emerged strongly as a theme in other teachers' interviews and this is described in a later section.

In the following short piece Mr. Gassama described how he felt 'very good' knowing that his work as a teacher was helping to develop The Gambian nation. Feeling 'very good' about one's work as a teacher is crucial to teacher effectiveness (Hargreaves 1997). Hence the feeling of teachers such as Mr. Gassama in helping to successfully develop The Gambia is important. As with Kawsu, I was convinced that Mr. Gassama's desire for Gambian national development was genuine. He organized the Boy Scout movement in Lamin School in his own time after school and at weekends for no payment. As well as traditional activities such as camping and wildlife observation Mr. Gassama's Boy Scouts helped in the town in local projects such as drainage and road building. Mr. Gassama was proud of his Boy Scouts and pointed them out to me as we walked together through the school compound. Mr. Gassama was greeted by many of his pupils as he walked into school. Nias (1988;210) notes that an important part of a successful teachers' identity is connected with 'establishing relationships with children'. Mr. Gassama fulfilled this criteria.

G.P.R-H; So why are you a teacher?

Mr. Gassama; As I stated I just want to develop the country.

G.P.R-H; How do you feel as a teacher?

Mr. Gassama; I feel like I am developing the Gambian education system. I feel very good about developing the nation to its best form. I feel like someone who is just helping to eradicate illiteracy. Your first aim as a teacher is to eradicate illiteracy so to do this you employ teachers. This is the first thing that the teachers try to do is to get rid of this ignorance.

Mr. Gassama was adamant that one of the main reasons he chose to teach was to develop the Gambian nation. The fact that he was successfully carrying out this development objective meant that he felt good about himself as a teacher.

For Mr. Gassama (and Kawsu Sillah) dispelling ignorance through improving the national literacy rate should be one of the first aims of a teacher. In 1995 the literacy rate in The Gambia was 23%. Significantly, Mr. Gassama does not phrase, eradicating illiteracy in terms of the *individual* child but rather in terms of the nation's well being. National development as opposed to individual success is paramount for Mr. Gassama. Mr. Gassama felt that as a teacher it was his patriotic duty to try to help improve Gambian literacy. As with Kawsu, Mr. Gassama had a 'strong political commitment to improving children's life chances' (Nias 1989;32).

In the following transcripts in the next section I show how Mrs. Baldeh, Amie Sey-Faal, Kawsu and Mr. Gassama believe they are given respect by society because of their community and nationalist work as teachers. In Chapter Two I discussed the changing *political* context within which Lamin school teachers worked as teachers. I examined how teachers had increased self respect for

their work because they perceived the government as sympathetic and encouraging of their work. Whilst reading the following section on community respect for teachers it is important to bear in mind the wider *political* context of support and respect for the teachers discussed in Chapter Two.

### **11.3 Community Respect for Teachers' Nationalistic Work**

My findings with Lamin School teachers are in broad agreement with those of the Gambia Teachers' Union whose survey found that 66% of Gambian teachers felt generally respected in the community (1995;32) <sup>88</sup>.

G.P.R-H; How does 'society' see you as a female senior mistress?

**Really we are very well respected because we are helping The Gambia. A teacher has the privilege in any society. I feel good & proud of myself.**  
(Mrs.B. Baldeh)

G.P.R-H; How do you feel about the professional status of teaching in society?

**Kawsu Sillah; Well it is very revered by most Gambians although some they seem to be very lacking about the whole concept of a teacher. Frankly speaking all I can say is that teachers are well revered as they are seen by society as partners in development. Partners in the sense that everybody is playing his or her own part in that direction. Teaching is a profession where**

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<sup>88</sup> This is in contrast to the situation in Nigeria where 'the traditional respect and prestige enjoyed by teachers have been eroded quite considerably' (Awanbor 1996;8). Thus within different countries within West Africa teachers' status considerably varies.

children become educated & that itself is development. So people think that they are partners in development.

G.P.R-H; How do people outside of teaching see teachers?

K.S; **Well they see teachers as guiders and molders and partners in development. They respect them definitely.**

G.P.R-H; Why do they respect teachers?

KS They feel they are doing a noble job. Most of the parents were not sent to school so they regret that have not been to school. The teacher at the school having these people's children, I am sure that they would appreciate it.  
(Kawsu Sillah).

G.P.R-H; How do you feel as a teacher-?

I feel happy as a teacher. Yes and also glad because when I go out many people will know me also. They will introduce me to their parents. I like that. They welcome me and sometimes they invite me to their compounds. And they will also come to my compound to visit me. **It is good to be a teacher in The Gambia.**  
(Amie Sey-Faal).

Mrs. Baldeh, Kawsu and Amie 'felt good' about their work as teachers because they were given tremendous respect and privilege by society. Amie enjoyed being a teacher in The Gambia because when in town people would know and respect her as a teacher and thus visit Amie at home and invite Amie into their compounds. Being introduced by the children Amie taught to their parents made Amie 'feel good'. Nias' teachers also noted that they enjoyed being 'needed and loved by the children and the parents' (Nias 1989;67). When walking back to the bus station with Amie after school one day, several parents called out to Amie

'Teacher, Teacher!' as a sign of respect. Amie obviously enjoyed her relationships with the children and their parents.

Mrs. Baldeh and Kawsu believed that they were given this respect because the work of teachers helped in the development of The Gambia. Indeed Kawsu believed that teachers were seen as 'partners in development'. Mr. Gassama and Master spoke of respect being given to teachers because it was known that teachers were knowledgeable people who led exemplary moral lives.

**Mr. Gassama; There is a big respect for teachers in the whole community in the society. When I go outside the school I don't go to the Club or the disco because when I do I meet up with my children there. I am given respect where I am staying. They come to my house, give me water and everything. So that is a big respect for me and their parents also they respect me. So when you are a teacher all those people they respect you. So and so is the teacher of my daughter so let me greet him.**

G.P.R-H; Is it a new thing that teachers are given respect?

**Mr. Gassama; I cannot say of the past because I am a teacher of the 90's. When I started teaching I was not renting I was given my room free of charge because of respect because they want to know. The people upcountry they really respected me. They liked me very well. And the students too they like you. Students they bring presents for you in large numbers this is for you and this is for you. It is very interesting so there is respect. They respect you as the teacher.**

Gambian people respected Mr. Gassama as a teacher, particularly rural Gambians, because according to Mr. Gassama 'they want to know'. Sugrue



(1996) notes that in Ireland primary teachers continue to enjoy social status and respect within the community, particularly in rural areas. In urban areas there are many more educated people such as doctors, nurses and other state workers hence it was in the rural areas that Mr. Gassama felt that he was given the most respect as a knowledgeable teacher<sup>89</sup>. The Gambia is a largely illiterate society hence western knowledge gained from books was a scarce commodity. There was no television in rural areas and one of the few sources of knowledge was from people who have traveled and/or have an education. Lack of western 'book' knowledge was particularly acute in remote up-country rural Gambia where the illiteracy rate was high (Social Dimensions of Adjustment 1995).

In order to become a teacher, even an unqualified teacher such as Mr. Gassama, it was necessary to have a secondary education. Hence in rural areas where most people have not been to school, a teacher was respected as a person who holds knowledge. Being a respected holder of knowledge made Mr. Gassama feel good about himself. (I was given respect by the community for holding a Master's degree from London University).

Mr. Gassama stated that he was given 'big respect' outside of the school. He thus adopted the teacher identity both inside and outside school. Similarly by blurring the boundaries between personal and professional lives, Nias' teachers achieved 'wholeness' in their lives (Nias 1989;198). Thus he did not go to the

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<sup>89</sup> This concept of teachers being given respect on the basis of their knowledge was confirmed to me by Charles Aheto, a Voluntary Services Overseas tutor and a secondary school headteacher

disco or Club where people drank alcohol and smoked. For Mr. Gassama to be seen in such a place would taint his respectable image as a teacher. Being respectable outside of school carried moral overtones that Mr. Gassama felt teachers had a duty to uphold. Concerning this respectable and moral image that teachers were expected to uphold in society Master said,

**'It is the teacher who teaches the future leaders of the world. That shows even when you are not in the classroom. That shows when you are in other walks of life because people tend to copy the teachers. People feel that teachers are right in whatever they are doing. They want to imitate teachers, so being a profession we are supposed to guide them through talking to them and through our own appearance and so on'. (Master)**

According to Master, teachers were respected because they were known to teach everyone, including 'future leaders of the world'. Master felt that teachers were admired and respected in society because 'whatever they are doing, they are right'. Interestingly Master equated being a professional with holding a moral stance and position. Being a professional teacher meant that the teacher had to uphold the community's values and act as moral guardians through the teacher's own actions and behavior. Thus for Master if a teacher failed to act in a proper moral manner he or she would lose their professional status. The moral position of teachers in society is similar Grace's late nineteenth century teachers who were 'social and cultural missionaries- a kind of secular priesthood' (Grace 1978;11). Please see Chapter Five for a discussion of teachers' moral purposes and professionalism.

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in Ghana.

Being 'right' in a predominately Muslim culture means not drinking alcohol, or at least not being seen to drink alcohol. Some teachers with whom we socialised would drink alcohol at our house but would refuse alcohol in the local bar. Other respectable and moral guardians of the community who drank alcohol at the pub included the local doctor, Master's brother, and a retired headteacher. People knew that the doctor and the retired headmaster drank there because the doctor would park his car outside the bar. He knew this was challenging the norms and customs and hence was not to be 'seen' inside the bar. We would drink in the pub but in a separate room in the back of the bar. The doctor called out to the patron who would pass us beer bottles through a window. Thus we were never actually 'seen' at the bar. Some members of the community would have been outraged if they knew the doctor and a retired headmaster drank alcohol in a pub.

**Here we are given respect. 75% of people respect teachers. Here the politicians are teachers. For this National Election Assembly Council many teachers apply for it. Since they are our fellow teachers they cannot wish us any malice so they have to respect us. I do not know of the past between politicians and the teachers. The Minister now was a teacher so she has to respect us. I can say that they respect us.**  
(Mr. Gassama).

Being perceived as nationalistic, knowledgeable and morally upright Gambian citizens accrued teachers important political responsibilities. It was interesting to note that it was to the teachers whom the Government turned to administer the

democratic elections during the winter of 1996/1997 when I was carrying out my fieldwork. The Government trusted and respected the teachers to carry out this important national work of ensuring a transition from a military dictatorship to a democratically elected government. The National Election Assembly Council who oversaw the election, employed many voluntary teachers who administered the election booths, the collection of the ballot boxes and their counting. The elections were declared 'free and fair' by the European Union representative to The Gambia (The Daily Observer, January 10th 1997).

Some of Lamin's teachers believed that teaching was 'a noble profession' because teaching involved personal and economic 'sacrifice and commitment'. This perception of teachers as self sacrificing and committed people further added to the communities respect for them. Ms. Mansell, Kawsu and Mr. Gassama stated that they gave this personal sacrifice to develop their nation. In the following section I examine the major theme of teaching being a 'noble job' which emerged during the interviews.

#### 11.4 *Teaching as 'a noble profession'*

I was frequently told by Lamin's teachers that 'teaching is a noble profession'. Being *noble* was thus an important concept in some of Lamin's teachers interpretation of their work. The following transcripts of Ms. Mansell and Mr. Bah were typical amongst those teachers who saw their work as noble.

As I have experienced it teaching is a very difficult job and unless you are willing to sacrifice you are not a teacher. **A teacher is somebody who is committed.** (Ms. Mansell)

Mr. Bah; **Being a teacher is a sacrifice job.** If you want to find money and be wealthy you have to find another job other than teaching. Teachers are the poorest people in the community. Unlike other jobs teachers only depend on their monthly salary. That's the only way to get money. There are no other benefits from it. **That's why teaching is a noble job.**

G.P.R-H; What do you mean teaching is a noble job?

Mr. Bah; **As a teacher you feed from your sweat so it is a noble profession.** Well the money that you receive is very much pure, because you strive for it. As a teacher you are always depending upon your monthly salary. There is no other means of getting money unlike other jobs where you have money before the end of the month.

You have to sacrifice. You have to have patience and depend upon the salary you have. **You always have to be sacrificing in teaching.**

G.P.R-H; Why do you sacrifice?

**You sacrifice for your future. You sacrifice for your children and Gambian children so we can have more development.** (Mr. Bah).

In these interviews the overlapping discourses of nationalism, sacrifice, commitment and being noble coalesce. Ms. Mansell's and Mr. Bah's work as teachers was interpreted through these discourses. These virtuous discourses empower and sustain their work and image as teachers. To be a Gambian teacher demanded tremendous commitment and moral righteousness. They make this sacrifice and commitment so their pupils and thus The Gambia can develop. Imran, an unqualified female teacher, invoked the notion of teachers being noble because they helped people.

Just as Lamin's teachers constantly refer to their 'sacrifice', Nias' teachers speak of their 'commitment' to the job. For Nias this notion of 'commitment' was central to any understanding of primary teachers (Nias 1989:29). Similarly Lortie notes that commitment is important to teachers. Lortie makes commitment synonymous with 'involvement', indicating 'a readiness to allocate scarce personal resources' for example time, money and energy to teaching (Lortie 1975:189). Equally Lamin teachers' sacrifice, in terms of time, money and enthusiasm, is central to their professional sense of self. They told me that to teach large classes of children in poor physical buildings with scarce resources demanded patriotism and personal sacrifice. This notion of personal sacrifice for the next generation was a central aspect of their professionalism.

Mr. Bah felt that teaching involved personal sacrifice because it did not involve corruption. Like Master he was proud that no teachers have been accused of corruption by the new Government. (Please see Chapter Seven). Unlike some dishonest and selfish professions which take unfair financial advantage of their

responsible positions, it was widely believed amongst Lamin's teachers that teachers are unselfish and patriotic and have Gambian national development as their central concern. According to Mr. Bah, unlike other salaried jobs, in which you can receive corrupt money, teachers get paid 'clean' money at the end of the month. The expression 'feeding from your sweat' belongs within this noble and self sacrificing discourse. 'Feeding from your sweat' refers to the fact that it was purely through Mr. Bah's own hard work that he received his salary. Mr. Bah was proud of being a noble and honest patriotic teacher.

### **11.5 Moral aspects**

Like Mr. Bah and Ms. Mansell, Kawsu Sillah also believed that teaching was a noble profession. In addition to teachers being virtuous because of their sacrifice Kawsu believed teaching to be inextricably linked to imparting moral values.

**Kawsu Sillah; Well teaching is a very noble profession. The interaction that you have with people from other backgrounds is very good.**

**G.P.R-H; What do you mean teaching is a noble profession?**

**K.S; Teaching is a noble profession because my role is to impart knowledge into them, to impart good values, & to help them develop skills. And above all trying to inculcate good morals. Education without morals amounts to nonentity.**

**G.P.R-H; What do you mean education without morals is tantamount to nothing?**

**K.S; That means education has to go alongside with good morals. Morals means values, good behaviour and how to respect elderly people. The subject I am teaching is about imparting knowledge, good culture and morals. By morals I mean our culture and norms and internalise them. (Kawsu Sillah).**

For Kawsu Sillah education and thus teaching must have a moral dimension. Without morals education for Kawsu was 'a non-entity'. Similarly Nias' teachers emphasised that they 'cared for and accepted moral responsibility' for children. She notes that even the agnostic and atheist teachers amongst her sample 'appeared to be influenced by the Christian moral tradition' (Nias 1988;210).

Although Kawsu was an Islamic Marabout's son and thus Kawsu was a knowledgeable Muslim, he specifically did not mention Islamic values and morals. Perhaps this was because he was respecting the fact that I was not a Muslim. However, dominate Gambian culture and norms were Islamic and Kawsu perceived teaching as a noble profession because it inculcated such Islamic values and morals. It can be seen that that Kawsu's beliefs about teaching's nobility and moral purposes strongly resonate with Master's notions of the professional teacher.

A further dominant theme which emerged from the teachers concerned their frustration with the lack of promotions.



## **11.6 Promotions**

In this section I examine how teachers actually experienced the promotion system (Evetts 1994). Many of them were frustrated with their lack of progress through the teaching career. Similarly Nias' teachers mentioned that they were 'anxious' about their careers and especially their 'long term prospects for promotion' (Nias 1989;124).

From my discussions with the teachers it would seem that nearly all qualified teachers have applied for promotion. Specific posts within particular schools are not advertised, rather a 'pool' system operates. Thus the Ministry of Education can select and appoint a teacher from a large pool of applicants to any number of posts anywhere in the country when and as a vacancy arises. Promotion is supposedly based upon the number of years of qualification and present post. The Ministry also keeps a file on every teacher with comments from the teachers' headteacher(s). Thus purportedly promotion is based upon experience and the personal file and occasionally an interview for a senior position such as a headship.

In Chapter Two I described that the primary sector was rapidly expanding and thus there were opportunities for new classroom teachers and a limited number of senior staff posts and headships. This macro expansion of the education system

is important for teachers' commitment (Ball and Goodson 1985). Although there were an increasing number of classroom teachers needed, there were few promotion opportunities. The General Secretary of The Gambia Teachers' Union explained the situation to me.

'Promotion is a very tedious exercise because the steps are very, very narrow and it creates an acute bottle neck because of the limited number of places available for teachers to be promoted'. (GTU General Secretary).

Thus the teachers' hierarchy was 'fairly flat' (Pollard 1985) as is the U.K.'s, which led to teachers' frustration. Only Master who had reached the pinnacle of his career was satisfied with the promotion system. My findings are thus in agreement with those of the Gambia Teachers' Union (GTU) Secretariat study in which 73% of the teachers surveyed said 'they have no confidence in the promotion system' (GTU 1995;28).

### ***11.7 Teachers' Frustration Concerning Lack of Promotion***

I have been in the field for so long & I have not received any promotion or increment. Everything is so expensive now that you both have to work now.....I feel very very very very bad about **not being given any promotion yet.....**Teachers need to be encouraged more because it is a noble job. We teach all others before they can be professionals. **Otherwise we will leave to go and find a better paying job.** So many teachers of my age are leaving now to get other jobs.  
(Mrs. McIntre)

I feel very bad about being passed over. If I got the chance I would take another profession other than teaching.....I was an unqualified teacher for 8 years starting in 1978. In 1986 I did my

Primary Teachers Certificate at the College and hence have been a qualified teacher for 10 years now. 4 years ago I was made a deputy headteacher. However one of those ODA trained teachers has been given my position and I have lost my promotion and been placed here in the classroom again. **It is all to do with favouritism and not merit. The promotion system is not fair. It is said to be by merit but they never follow it.** It is not the policy that the ODA trained teachers are to be given promotion.  
**(Mr. Njie)**

Mrs. McIntre and Mr. Njie were both so frustrated with the lack of promotion in their teaching careers, that if they could, they would have left teaching. Mrs. McIntre had been teaching for nearly fifteen years and was exasperated that she had not been giving any promotions in that time. Mr. Njie was aggrieved that he had been given the promotion to deputy head only to find that four years later he was back in the classroom. Mr. Njie blamed his unfortunate situation on corruption. In the following section Ms. Mansell and Mrs. McIntre stated that despite the recent political changes and the rhetoric concerning fairness and anti-corruption, that promotions were still made on the basis of whom you knew rather than competency and qualifications.

**11.8 'It is Not What you Know, but Whom you Know' Mrs. McIntre;  
Nepotism in the Promotion System**

The Gambia Teachers' Union Secretariat (1995) reported that Gambian teachers highlighted that 'who you know' was the determining element for promotion<sup>90</sup>.

Mrs. McIntre and Ms. Mansell reiterated these GTU findings

**In these days they do not promote the hardworking teacher. But you may know of a teacher who is working very hard in that school & they are not promoted. It is not what you know but whom you know. That is the main problem in our Ministry. Promotion is not easy in the Ministry because there are so many teachers.**

**(Mrs. McIntre)**

G.P.R-H; Why are you still the *Acting* Senior Mistress of Grade 6 after two years?

**As I said before teaching is just sacrifice but I still have the hope. If it comes, well I am here. I know of a Headmaster who has acted for 6 years, just acting. Such things are existing. Candidly, I should have thought of leaving the field or you know something else because I believe I am not given my dues. I am three years senior to some teachers and they are promoted and I am not when we all applied. With the present government we believed it would be merit. It is still who you know, not the person who can do it.**

**(Ms. Mansell)**

Mrs. McIntre acknowledged that there were so many teachers within the profession that it was difficult to obtain promotion. Mrs. McIntre was frustrated with the inequality of the system which favoured those teachers who had the right

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<sup>90</sup> Interestingly both Evetts (1989) and Grant (1989) mention that 'sponsorship' by a headteacher and/or inspector is deemed by teachers to be important for promotion. 'Sponsorship' can be understood as nepotism.

connections rather than competence. Ms. Mansell had occupied the post of Acting Senior Mistress for three years and had hoped for promotion to Senior Mistress. Ms. Mansell had expected that under the new Government she would be given that promotion based upon her merit. However so far she had been disappointed. As a result of such nepotism the GTU wrote

'There is clearly the need to set down criteria and procedures for the promotion of teachers and that these be made easily accessible so that the necessary transparency and objectivity could be practiced'. (Gambia Teachers' Union 1995;29).

From my interview with Mr. Jatta, this recommendation by the GTU would appear to be necessary. Mr. Jatta, the deputy headteacher, affirmed that knowing the Principal Education Officer (PEO) was crucial to his being posted near to his home.

Sometimes I need a change so I asked the then Principal Education Officer, the late Mr. Mendy who was my friend. We were together for everything. He said that I cannot move you from where you are at the moment because I must have somewhere to place and I haven't got that. But in the meantime you can stay. Then he came and told me that he wanted to move me to Yundum Primary school. This is just next to my home in Lamin. (Mr. Jatta).

Being the friend of the late Principal Education Officer ensured that Mr. Jatta secured a posting near to his home. This anecdotal evidence would appear to confirm Ms. Mansell's and Mrs. McIntre's suspicions that it is 'whom you know' rather than competency which is important for promotions. However in the next

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section Master and Mr. Bah argued that the new Government had introduced 'transparency and objectivity' to the promotion system. They stated that nepotism was a thing of the past now that the new Government were in power.

**11.9 'Now it's more a question of merit and service' (Master); A Fairer Promotion System under the New Government?**

Master had told me that when he was making his career in the previous decade that 'he had known a lot of people in the Ministry who had helped him.' Now he declared it was no longer like that.

Yes it is good to struggle hard so you will be recommended. This was not the case before these political changes. Sometimes you would teach someone and be in the field and because he has some relationship with the top guys he would become your superior boss. They would just look for a place for their friend. **Now it's more a question of merit and service rather than the other. We used to say 'not what you know but whom you know'. It's not like that now. It's more complicated.**  
**(Master)**

G.P.R-H; It used to be said here that it's 'not what you know but whom you know', has this changed now at all?

Mr. Bah; You know The Gambia is a tiny community, it is very very small. Almost everybody knows everybody & it will be very difficult to change that overnight. But I think now it is changing a bit though very very slowly. It is becoming whom & what you know rather than just whom you know.

G.P.R-H; Is this process changing?

Yes, because before all you needed were the right connections. But now you have to get the qualifications. Maybe in future it will just be the qualifications that matter.

Because most of these connections are breaking now because the people who have been influential under the old system, most of them have collapsed now both financially & socially.

(Mr. Bah)

In order to achieve promotion today, qualifications, experience and competence were all that mattered to Master. He criticised the promotion system in which he had successfully made his career stating that promotion depended upon whom one knew. He was positive concerning the recent political changes and stated that they heralded a new era in which primarily competency based promotion operated. Mr. Bah argued that *both* connections and experience were necessary to secure promotion. Even assuming that the new Government are willing to attempt to eradicate nepotism within such a small context it will be difficult to implement. As a lecturer at The Gambia College in 1995 an English paper I had marked and failed was passed back to me. It was suggested that I had made a mistake and should remark the paper. I subsequently learnt that the paper belonged to the niece of the then Vice-President.

Teacher's morality and religion discussed earlier in this chapter was believed by the teachers to be important in ensuring their promotions. In the following section Master, Ms. Mansell, Sunta Jawo and Mrs. Baldeh described how they were 'praying to God for their promotion'.

**11.10 'I am Praying To Allah for Promotion' Mrs. Jawo; The Teacher's Religious Approach to Promotion.**

In the following interviews Ms. Mansell, Sunta Jawo and Mrs. Baldeh all asserted that their promotion, or lack of it, was up to God.

**I feel that maybe my chance is coming. God has it for me, so it may reach me. Anyway I have applied this year so I don't know.**  
**(Ms. Mansell)**

**I just have to pray to God that I will get my promotion to get more money than I am earning now. So everybody in the teaching field is praying to Allah for promotion. We have all applied for promotion. You have 3 choices. I have applied for Class A headship, deputy headship and class B deputy or senior mistress. If Allah helps me I will get the promotion. I would go anywhere if I was given the promotion. My husband is Senior Master Class C schools & he has applied for Headship & deputy in Class B schools. If Allah helps him he will get that promotion.....**  
**Sunta Jawo**

**If you are doing your job properly God will reward you.**  
**Mrs. Baldeh**

As with Master above it may be seen these teachers despite their active pursuance of promotion believe that Allah's will prevails. These teachers asserted that if they had prayed to Allah, then promotion could be expected. 'In Sha Allah'-'If God Wills it' was a phrase commonly used by the teachers in connection with their promotions. 'In Sha Allah' refers to the hope that in the future God will look favourably upon the teacher and grant them their promotion.



The importance of respect in moral values and belief in God was once again deemed important by these teachers, this time in connection with promotion.

### ***Conclusion***

This chapter has highlighted the importance of the wider social and political contexts within which teachers work. These teachers perceived themselves in the role of 'national development workers'. They did not work within a social and cultural vacuum. Rather their positive perceptions of work were continually reinforced by the political and social environment within which they worked. The teachers believed that they were important and central in The Gambia's national development. They took great pride in being responsible for the education and well being of the next generation.

Teaching as work was perceived by the teachers as a complex web of social and political constraints and opportunities. The positive Government position towards teachers' work as being central to national development reaffirmed and encouraged the teachers' self-esteem in their work. The teachers' morale was shown to be enhanced through the communities respect for their work.

The teachers believed that their work was virtuous and noble and blessed by God himself. In this chapter the complex and subtle connections between nationalism and religion was explored through teaching as work. The teachers felt that

inculcating moral order into the children was an important aspect of their work. They saw themselves as moral guides who were leading children and their communities in upholding traditional values. They felt that whatever they did was observed by the community. As moral leaders they felt the need to set high personal standards in and out of school.

## Chapter 12

### *Teachers' Changing Professional Discourses*

#### *Introduction*

This chapter summarises the answers to the research questions which were stated in Chapter One. This leads to a discussion of the multiple ways in which Gambian teachers understand their work as professional. I discuss the contradictory effects of double shift teaching upon teachers' professionalism. The chapter states the ways in which this thesis supports and geographically builds upon the literature concerned with teachers' professionalism.

The main research question concerned the following contradiction.

*'Given the poor material conditions of the Gambian teaching profession (according to teachers these were: large classes, dilapidated school buildings, scarce resources, heavy work load and few promotion opportunities) why was it that some of the Gambian teachers I had observed demonstrated such commitment to their work?'*

This apparent contradiction was discussed and examined by asking five main research questions. The following table (Table 12.1) restates the research questions and summarises their main findings. A discussion of these research

findings is the focus of this final chapter.

**Table 12.1**  
**Summary of Research Questions and Findings**

<b><i>Research Question</i></b>	<b><i>Summary of Research Findings</i></b>
1. What does 'professional teacher' mean within the Gambian context?	Nationalist, Islamic and Employment discourses (see <i>Table 12.2</i> )
2. What was Gambian society's perceptions of teaching and teachers?	Highly respected profession. Teachers perceived as knowledge holders & national development workers
3. How had the recent political changes affected teachers' work?	Enhancement of nationalist and Islamic discourses. Intensification of teachers' work leading to enhanced professionalism and deprofessionalism.
4. Why do Gambian student teachers train to be teachers?	Lack of alternative careers; safe and secure employment; nationalism; vocational calling; salary; social mobility; parental encouragement; inspirational childhood teachers.
5. What motivated Gambian teachers to stay in the teaching profession?	Professional discourses; status; pension; lack of alternative work with similar salary; family responsibilities

Research questions one, two, four and five were answered in Chapters Nine, Ten and Eleven. These chapters described the different ways Gambian student

teachers and teachers' 'think about themselves as teachers'<sup>91</sup> (Knowles 1989;99). My research findings show that Gambian teachers perceive their occupation as professional because of a large number of overlapping factors (please see Table 12.2). These professional discourses encourage student teachers to join and stay in the profession.

Teachers understand their work as professional<sup>92</sup> through the overlapping *moral* discourses of Islam and nationalism<sup>93</sup>. Nationalism and Islam demand 'sacrifice' and high moral values making teaching a 'noble profession'. Teaching is seen by some teachers as a religious 'calling' rewarded by God. Teachers are committed to the welfare of the next Gambian generation which accrues them community respect. They understand their work as professional because they are qualified and employed as Government civil servants with a reasonable income which is pensionable. This understanding of teachers as respected 'noble professionals' (see Table 12.2) explains why some Gambian teachers are so committed to their work. The multiple professional discourses sustain and empower Gambian teachers who often have to teach in poor working conditions.

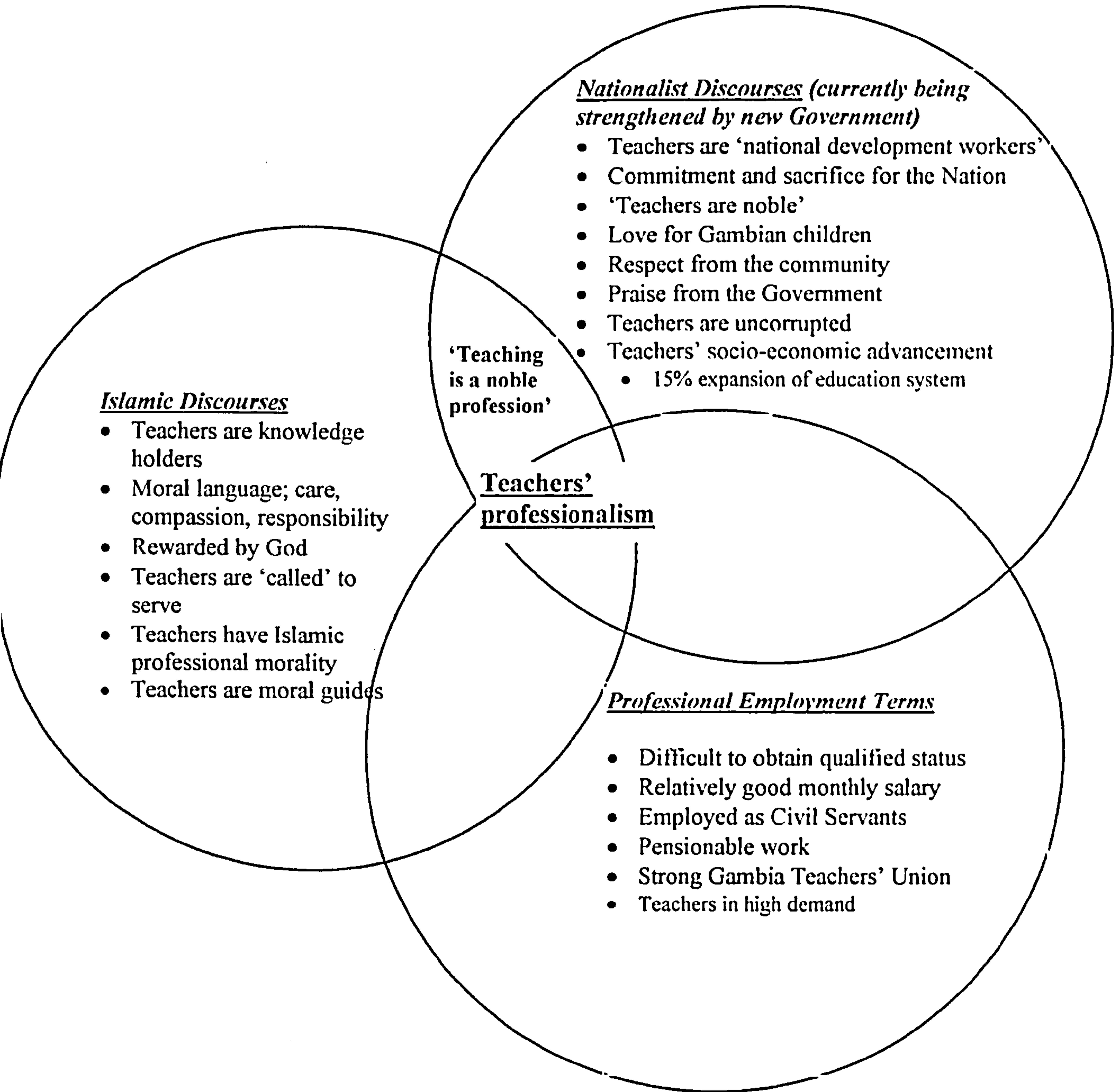
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<sup>91</sup> Knowles (1989;99) notes that teacher role identity is the way individuals think about themselves as teachers -the images they have as self-as-teacher'.

<sup>92</sup> I understand a teacher's professionalism to mean a focus on the quality of a teacher's professional *practice* (Hoyle 1980). A teacher is acting professionally if they have exceptional standards of dedication, commitment and a strong service ethic (Helsby 1995; Talbert & McLaughlin 1996). The term 'professionalisation' refers to the self interest of the teaching occupation in terms of its status, autonomy and conditions of work (Helsby 1995). Helsby (1995) notes that the altruistic behaviour necessitated in being a 'professional' is not always compatible with the self interest of 'professionalisation'. (See Chapter Eight for a full discussion).

**Table 12.2**

**Venn Diagram Showing Overlapping Discourses constituting Gambian Teachers' Professionalism.**



Chapters Five and Six specifically addressed the third research question '*How have the recent political changes affected teachers' work?* Political changes both at the international and national levels are affecting Gambian teachers' professionalism. The new nationalist government of President Jammeh has significantly strengthened teachers' nationalist professional discourses (see Table 12.2). In addition President Jammeh's government has professionalised some of the terms and conditions of teachers. However, structural reforms, such as double shift teaching, which is encouraged by the World Bank and implemented by the government, is leading to a severe intensification of teachers' work. This intensification of teachers' work has encouraged contradictory outcomes for Gambian teachers. Teachers are being both professionalised and deprofessionalised by the structural reforms. This chapter summarises and discusses those issues which are presently professionalising and deprofessionalising teachers.

The chapter concludes with a discussion of teachers' *situated* professionalism<sup>94</sup>. Gambian teachers' professionalism is situated within specific national Gambian cultures. Thus teachers' professional cultures are situated within distinct national socio-economic contexts. Nevertheless, according to the literature, it would

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<sup>93</sup> It is important to note that The Gambia is predominately an Islamic country. Thus for the teachers nationalism and Islam are not discreet professional discourses but rather intertwined discourses.

<sup>94</sup> This notion of a *situated* professionalism builds upon Helsby's (1995;1996) work which states that the specific micro-political context of secondary schools' departmental cultures are important in developing teachers' professionalism.

appear that, superficially, there are similar shared professional discourses internationally between some Gambian and European primary teachers. These similarities are however qualitatively different because of the differing socio-economic contexts. The final section discusses the notion of similar professional discourses internationally. I have not examined the differences because to begin to do so would entail an equally thorough investigation of the context being compared. In addition I chose to begin to look at the similarities in order to highlight the fact that Gambian teachers' sense of professionalism is comparable to that found in developed countries.

### ***12.1 The nationalist discourses***

A central discourse of Gambia College students' and Lamin teachers' professionalism concerns their 'love' for The Gambia and Gambian children to whom they are politically and professionally committed. In The Gambia College questionnaire the students overwhelmingly ranked 'I want to develop The Gambia' as their first reason in choosing to become teachers. 95% of male student teachers and 90% of female student teachers claimed that they were primarily becoming teachers in order to develop The Gambia. The following was typical of the student teachers' nationalist responses.

'I wanted to become a teacher to develop my nation. Teaching is very important. Since I was young I have lived in this nation and it has taken care of me. It employed teachers to teach me until I was finished so it's



good for me to pay the nation back. (Female PTC student).

This teacher wanted to become a teacher to pay back The Gambia for her education. She felt that teaching was an important profession in developing The Gambia. 75% of male student teachers and 61% of female student teachers ranked teaching as a 'very important job because it helps with Gambian development'.

Similarly in Lamin Primary school the nationalist discourse was a powerful theme which frequently occurred in the semi-structured interviews. The following was a typical comment.

**'.....All Gambians have to try to develop this beloved country into a paradise & hopefully we as teachers can help with that.... I have an obligation to my country....I wanted to play my role in the socio-economic development of the country. That's why I am a teacher..... I am contented because I am serving the nation.'** (Kawsu Sillah; Lamin primary school).

The passionate desire of Mr. Sillah and his colleagues to develop their 'beloved country' was fulfilled by working as teachers. They perceived education as a central process in Gambian socio-economic development. Thus the teachers derived a tremendous sense of satisfaction from knowing that their work was contributing towards the goal of national development<sup>95</sup>.

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<sup>95</sup> 68% of student teachers at the Gambia College stated that they were satisfied with teaching because it helped with the socio-economic development of the country.

Teachers told me that The Gambia did not have any physical resources to exploit hence the development of the country's human resources, Gambian children, was a necessity. Intellectual development of these 'human resources' was essential for Gambian socio-economic advancement. In The Gambia College questionnaire 79% of student teachers stated that they placed young Gambians intellectual and emotional development at the heart of their work. The teachers saw themselves as altruistically working for the benefit of Gambian children as opposed to their own immediate interests. They stated that their 'love and sacrifice for the nation' made them professional because they cared for the children. Loving and caring for Gambian children was central to their professional understanding of their work.

The teachers felt that their publicly spirited nationalism and love of Gambian children was widely respected by society. My findings concur with the Gambia Teachers' Union (1995;32) whose survey found that 66% of teachers felt generally respected by the community. This respect was confirmed by their daily interactions with parents and the wider society. This community respect for teachers' reinforced images of themselves as 'professional nation builders'.

Teachers saw themselves as professionals because many teachers were economically and socially moving with their families from poor rural agricultural work to monthly salaried urban work. Salaries in urban areas are approximately 4-5 times higher than in rural areas (Gambia Teachers' Union 1995;5). In

addition services such as hospitals, clean drinking water, secondary schools, television and a greater variety of food produce were to be found in urban areas. Helping the extended family to move was perceived as assisting with the nation's development. Upon graduation a teacher's monthly salary and education would represent a socio-economic advance when compared with their parents' income.

Traditionally teaching has been used as an avenue for social mobility (Lortie 1975; Grace 1978). Yong (1995) notes that:

'In the developing countries teaching can still offer people from the lower class an avenue for socio-economic advancement and a better life. Those in teaching are often considered as having a good job. The notion expressed by Lortie (1975) that 'Teaching is clearly white collar, middle-class work and as such offers upward mobility for people in blue-collar or middle-class families' is still very much apparent in many developing countries' (Yong 1995:278).

My findings concerning the rural social origins of many of the students at The Gambia College (78% of male and 47% of female student teachers are from rural backgrounds) confirm this social mobility thesis of teaching. Additionally teaching is one of the few professional opportunities available for educated women in The Gambia.

Teachers frequently and proudly spoke of their profession as a 'noble profession'.

The simplicity of the phrase belies the complexity of its meaning. "Teaching is a

noble profession' was said in reference with Islamic and nationalist discourses (see Table 12.2).

'Teaching is a noble profession...You sacrifice for your children and Gambian children so we can have more development.' ( Mr. Bah).

In these interviews the overlapping discourses of nationalism, sacrifice, commitment and nobility coalesce. Ms. Mansell's and Mr. Bah's work as teachers was interpreted through these discourses. These virtuous discourses empower and sustain their work and image as teachers. To be a Gambian teacher demands tremendous commitment and sacrifice. They make this sacrifice and commitment so their pupils and thus The Gambia can develop.

Gambian teachers' professional narratives are not fixed but vary over time according to changes in the wider political context. This research was undertaken in an 'historical moment of cultural optimism' when the new nationalist Government of President Jammeh took power on July 22nd 1994 (Goodson and Walker 1991;78). President Jammeh has enhanced teachers' professional nationalist discourses in the various ways described below.

## ***12.2 Teachers professional nationalist discourses have been enhanced by President Jammeh's Government.***

Chapter Five described how the new Government of President Jammeh is vehemently nationalist. Unlike the previous Government, President Jammeh on several occasions has publicly applauded teachers as 'key national development builders' (The Daily Observer July 1996). Such shared national educational discourses between the teachers and the Government have enhanced teachers' professional nationalist discourses and their status within society.

During the 33 years of the Jawara regime, primary school buildings had to be paid for and built by the communities which needed them with no Government financial assistance. Throughout the Jawarra years there were no Senior Secondary schools built. In contrast, in its first year in power, the present Government has built 6 Senior Secondary schools, 14 junior secondary schools and 38 primary schools (Ministry of Education 1997).

This has led to increased professional satisfaction amongst primary school teachers because before the expansion primary school leavers had to drop out of the education system due to lack of middle schools. Now however there has been a significant rise in the primary to middle school transition rate which has significantly increased the professional satisfaction of primary teachers.

In addition teachers stated that the new Government has provided enough furniture so that children no longer have to bring their own desks and chairs to school. Teachers' Notes for teaching the Gambia National Curriculum are now

also available. Since the coup the total number of number of primary teachers has risen from 3,370 to 4,118. Hence the context within which primary teachers make their careers is an expanding one which is most significant for their career expectations and morale.

The physical development of the Gambian education system is a sign of the respect and esteem which society increasingly holds for teachers. This increased status within society serves to professionalise teachers. The following comments were typical concerning teachers' praise for the new Government.

'.... Before teaching was considered just as a dustbin for dropouts. But now people are looking to get into the profession. There has been a great deal of positive change with this new Government. Nowadays teaching is a very good profession' (Mr. Bah, Grade 3 Senior Master).

Mr. Bah felt that the political changes have *professionalised* the teaching force. Before President Jammeh, teaching was a job which people simply used as a 'stepping stone' to access other jobs which they preferred to do if they got the chance. Now however the status of teaching has dramatically reversed from one of low morale to one of increasingly high morale due to the political changes. Mr. Bah now feels *proud* to be a member of the teaching profession. The Master of Lamin School stated that the new Government had reinforced the honest, hardworking and patriotic image of teachers. Under the new Government the professional integrity of Gambian teachers has been strengthened.

The new Government has established 'Commissions of Enquiry' which investigate and prosecute former corrupt Government departments, ministers and

workers. To date no member of the teaching profession has been brought before a Commission of Inquiry for corrupt practices. I was told that teachers, unlike some other civil servants earn 'clean money and feed from their sweat'. Thus recent political changes have reinforced the honest patriotic image of teachers who according to Master are increasingly 'feeling pride and self-respect' in their profession.

The present changing socio-economic conditions within The Gambia offer both advantages and disadvantages to the process of teacher professionalisation. According to *some* teachers, Ministry of Education officials and the Gambia Teacher's Union, the present political and economic conditions *may* possibly be the most favourable in recent Gambian history for the professionalisation of teachers. Some Gambians argue that perhaps for the first time in Gambian politics there is a Government in power which has the best interests of teachers in mind. Other Gambians argue that the Coup has changed nothing except the names of corrupt politicians.

### **12.3 Teachers' Professional Islamic discourses**

In The Gambia teaching assumes a religious significance and moral authority thereby firmly imbuing teachers' work with professional qualities. Islamic discourses centrally featured in teachers' daily professional lives because Islam structures and gives meaning to the lives of Gambian teachers (Chapters Nine and Ten). It was felt by some Gambia College student teachers and Lamin school teachers that teaching involved 'a higher calling' from God (Sugrue 1996; Sockett 1993). The students told me that the Prophet spoke highly of teaching and thus some of the teachers believed that it was a privilege and an honour to be called to 'serve'. The following was typical of student teachers' professional Islamic discourses.

'Teaching is more than a profession. For me it is also a vocation because I am called to serve.... Teaching is appreciated by Allah himself and teachers can only be rewarded by God, not by man' (Male PTC student).

Teachers believed that whatever salary a teacher received now would be greatly enhanced in heaven because teaching is a religious and a vocational occupation. Qur'anic morals presented teachers with a moral code of conduct or 'ideals' (Sockett 1993;134) for teachers to work towards. Islamic professional morality is centrally situated within the discourse of being 'a noble profession'. Lamin's teachers had a 'well-established professional moral language' (Bergem 1993;311). They were confident in speaking of their emotional 'love, sacrifice,



respect and moral service for Gambian children'. This vocabulary provided a moral base for Gambian teachers' professionalism (Bergem 1993).

In 'The A,B,C of a professional teacher's duty in Region Two schools' (see Appendix Seven), a teacher is encouraged to 'educate pupils morally, intellectually and physically'. This document was pasted onto Master's wall to remind all teachers of their duties. Thus a Lamin teacher's duty is *firstly* to educate children *morally* and *secondly* to educate them intellectually.

Islam equates knowledge with moral principles and values (Sardar and Malik 1994) and it is a duty for Muslims to pursue moral knowledge or *ilm*.

'The search for knowledge is a sacred duty imposed upon every Muslim. Go in search of knowledge, even to China' (The Qur'an in Sardar and Malik 1994).

Thus by pursuing moral knowledge or *ilm* in their professional work Gambian teachers were carrying out a sacred duty which would be rewarded by God. Teaching was therefore a spiritually fulfilling occupation for Gambian teachers. Teachers stated that ignorance was an 'impurity' which the processes of teaching (lesson research and knowledge acquisition) helped to 'eradicate'.

Qualified teachers perceive themselves as professionals because they belong to the small minority of Gambians who have obtained two years of higher

education<sup>96</sup>. Many older Gambians have not had any formal education and 52% of Gambians are illiterate (Social Dimensions of Adjustment). Qualified teachers thus hold professional authority on the basis of their relatively high education.

Mrs. Baldeh noted that

'if you want to be a professional teacher you have to develop yourself & keep on learning'.

The concept of a professional teacher developing and improving themselves was a common theme in the interviews.

#### ***12.4 Professional moral guides***

A central aspect of teachers' professionalism was to act as a moral role model. Master, Mrs. Baldeh, Mr. Sillah and Mrs. Jammeh equated teachers' professionalism with moral leadership and guidance for young Gambians.

'People feel that teachers are right in whatever they are doing. They want to imitate teachers, so being a profession we are supposed to guide them through talking to them and through our own appearance and so on.'  
(Master).

For the Lamin school teachers this professional moral guidance demanded high personal moral standards both *within and outside* school. (In a small community

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<sup>96</sup> There were ten applicants to every place at The Gambia College hence qualified teachers occupied a restricted and enviable position. This restricted access to their ranks professionalised teachers (Gillin and Labaree 1996 in Goodson and Hargreaves).

such as Brikama where everybody knew each others' business, Mr. Gassama felt that it was important that as a professional teacher he did not go to the night club where he might be seen by his students).

In the following paragraph I discuss those employment terms which help to professionalise Gambian teachers' work (see Table 12.2).

### ***12.5 Teachers' professional employment terms***

The structural issues of being relatively well paid<sup>97</sup> Government Civil Servants with a pension were important issues in ensuring the professional status of teachers. One of the most significant structural issues is that teachers are employed and paid on the same pay scale as Civil Servants. Teachers are proud to be employed as Government Civil Servants. Being a Government Civil Servant fulfils teachers' nationalist discourses and ensures that teachers are relatively well paid public sector workers. A Gambian qualified teacher's salary is higher than qualified teachers' salaries in the West African countries of Nigeria, Ghana, Sierra Leone, Senegal, Mali and Guinea Bisseau .

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<sup>97</sup> Within the context of Gambian society's extended family system and high unemployment a wage earner such as a teacher was often under immense financial pressures to provide for their dependents. One student teacher told me that upon graduation her salary would have to help provide food, clothes, housing and school fees for nearly forty extended family members. Hence being 'well paid' is contextually specific.

Given that teachers often state dissatisfaction with their salaries (Webb 1985) a high proportion of Gambian student teachers (54% of male and 75% of female students) declared that they were content with their salaries. In Lamin school the same satisfaction with salaries was common amongst some of the staff. Additionally teachers' pensions were attractive and encouraged some teachers to remain in their positions until retirement. I interviewed some teachers who wished to retire but had to stay in teaching to ensure they obtained their pensions.

In the following section I discuss how the above professional discourses (nationalism, Islam and professional employment terms) helps teachers to manage and cope with the tensions and frustrations in their work.

### ***12.6 The discourses of professionalism help teachers to cope with their frustrations***

Despite the above mentioned professional terms under which teachers are employed and the previously stated increase in teachers and school buildings, it is important to remember that teaching conditions in The Gambia are far from favourable. Teachers' stated that their poor working conditions such as dilapidated buildings, a scarcity of books and a pupil teacher ratio of 1:45 constantly challenged teachers' claims to professionalism and undermined their morale.

Through the discourses of nationalism and Islam the teachers lived and worked with an image of themselves as sacrificing, altruistic 'noble professionals'. This research finding helps to answer the main research question concerning Gambian teachers' commitment despite the difficult working conditions. The belief in themselves as uncorrupted, morally upright professional teachers helped them to cope with the material frustrations of teaching in The Gambia. Believing in themselves as key national development workers whom the Government and their communities respected and supported assisted teachers in managing the tensions in their working lives. Constantly creating and re-creating these morally virtuous discourses sustained and empowered Gambian teachers<sup>98</sup>.

In addition to the material conditions which challenge teachers' professionalism, teachers' work is currently being intensified (Hargreaves 1995;158) through a process of educational restructuring reforms. In the following section I discuss the importance of the above teachers' professional discourses in helping them to manage this intensification of their work.

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<sup>98</sup> However the active articulation of these discourses did not always raise teachers' morale. Some teachers told me with a shrug of their shoulders that all they could do was to *hope* that the material poverty they now suffered would improve. The teachers often expressed this *hope* as '*In sha Allah*' which loosely translated means that things will get better when Allah decrees it.

### ***12.7 The professionalising effects of double shift teaching***

In Chapter Six I described how qualified teachers' work has recently been intensified through the introduction of double shift teaching. To reductively interpret the double shift system as oppressive or 'proletarianising' (Robertson 1996; Apple 1986) negates teachers' professional discourses through which they actively interpret educational restructuring (Woods 1994; Helsby 1995). The teachers' stories which I collected from Lamin Primary School, speak of the tensions, contradictions and dilemmas concerning the restructuring and intensification of their work. It is important to acknowledge the contradictory effects of the intensification of teachers work upon teachers' professionalism (see Table 12.3). In the following paragraphs I discuss how double shift teaching has professionalised and deprofessionalised teachers.

By only employing qualified teachers it is hoped that using the double shift system will gradually 'phase out' all unqualified teachers<sup>99</sup>. In Chapter Five I showed how currently only 58% of Gambian primary teachers have obtained qualified teacher status (QTS). Qualified Teacher Status is seen by unqualified and qualified teachers alike as a pre-requisite for professional status. Hence a major

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<sup>99</sup> Along with the redeployment of Senior Masters and Mistresses back into the classroom double shift teaching has meant that many unqualified teachers have recently lost their jobs. When I left The Gambia unqualified teachers were demonstrating outside the Ministry of Education against the loss of some of their jobs.

**Table 12.3: The contradictory effects of double-shift teaching upon teachers' professionalism**

<b><i>Double shift Professionalising factors</i></b>	<b><i>De-professionalising factors</i></b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Only employs <i>qualified</i> teachers.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reducing quality as Pupil:Teacher ratio rises from 1:45 to 1:50</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Unqualified teachers being phased out.</li> </ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reforms 'accommodated' within professional discourses of nationalism and Islam which are strengthened</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increases teaching hours and hence teachers' fatigue</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Offers possibility of Universal Primary Enrolment</li> </ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Raises salary by 50%</li> </ul>	

professionalising effect of double shift teaching is to make teaching an all qualified occupation.

In addition the 50% increase in teachers' salary was a significant pay rise and served to professionalise the teachers. It is critical to note that the teachers did not *just* work the double shift to increase their salaries (Davies 1993;168). The extra money was significant but was only one reason among several which encouraged teachers to work the double shift. Some teachers were reluctant to work the double shift and stated that they would be 'too tired' to teach effectively and 'it reduces quality and cheats the teachers and the children'<sup>100</sup>. These teachers had to live with the dilemma of increasing access to education whilst potentially compromising its quality.

In this chapter I have discussed the close correlation between teachers' patriotic professional discourses and the new Government's nationalism. These shared nationalist ideologies have facilitated the implementation of double shift teaching. Teachers such as Mrs. Jawo wanted to 'help' the new nationalist Government in its current educational crisis.

'There are so many coming to school and there is not enough room. All children must go to school and I feel I must help. I have to help because these are the nation's children..' (Mrs. Jawo).

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<sup>100</sup> The Gambia Teachers Union was in agreement with these teachers' critical comments, however, it supported the introduction of the double shift on the basis that there was no alternative to the current crisis.



Mrs. Jawo had not 'misrecognised' the intensification of her work (Apple 1988;45). Rather she was aware of The Gambia's current crisis in educational provision. Through her discourses of being a professional nationalist teacher she wanted to 'help' The Gambia which facilitated the implementation of double shift teaching.

Double shift teachers spoke of being professionally fulfilled because in the afternoon classes they now taught children who had been in their class last year. They knew these children and stated that it was 'really nice to see them progress'. Hence these teachers' professional interest in children's development was enhanced through teaching the double shift. In addition teachers interpreted the double shifts' extra work through Islamic discourses. Referring to double shift teaching Mrs. McIntre stated 'I want to work hard so that God will reward me'.

Thus the teachers who worked the double shift, 'accommodated' (Woods 1994) the reform within their existing professional discourses. Indeed double shift teaching may have served to strengthen teachers' nationalist and Islamic professional discourses. This research supports findings by Mac an Ghail (1992) and Troman (1996) that if the restructuring of teachers' work 'fits' with teachers' pre-existing professional self-images then teachers are likely to accept, with reservations, the intensification of their work.

Considering that the use of double shift teaching is a widespread policy throughout developing countries it is surprising that there is little published research on the effects of double shift teaching upon teachers' work. According to Bray (1990;73) double shift teaching has been the focus of 'surprisingly little research.' Similarly London (1993) notes that although it is 'accepted' that double shift schooling is qualitatively inferior to single shift teaching there is a lack of evidence to substantiate this assumption. Perhaps predictably World Bank (1988) research in neighbouring Senegal stated that test scores of children in single shift classes and double shift classes were comparable. The Gambian Ministry of Education reiterated this research in support of double shift schooling. However, Bray (1990;80) states that in 'most cases' educational quality suffers when double shift schooling is introduced. It clear is that more in-depth research upon the qualitative effects of double shift schooling is needed. What are the effects upon the quality of teaching when a teacher works the double shift? Are there significant differences in children's academic achievements between the morning and afternoon shifts?

## ***12.8 A situated professionalism: similar professional discourses between Gambian and European teachers***

Current literature on teachers' professional lives and careers is predominately North American and European. Hence by focusing upon Gambian teachers, this thesis *geographically* adds to the literature on teachers' professionalism. Gambian teachers' 'genealogies of context' are based upon histories, religions and cultures *different* to those found within Europe or North America. Thus Gambian teachers' professionalism is *situated* within specific geographical and cultural discourses. One factor which may contribute towards teachers' strong nationalism is that The Gambia achieved Independence in 1963 and thus is a relatively newly independent country. Gambian teachers' nationalist professional discourses are therefore *situated* within this historic context of nation building.

Gambian situated national discourses are filtered and mediated through the local school culture. Thus a situated professionalism is the result of both the macro and micro political contexts. Lamin school teachers' professional discourses are *situated* within the specific culture of their school. At Lamin School these nationalist Islamic discourses were actively encouraged by Master who publicly prayed five times a day and was devoutly nationalist. Further research is needed in *different* Gambian schools to ascertain the extent to which different situated professional discourses are prevalent in other schools. For example is there a significant difference between rural and urban school cultures?

Despite the concept of a *situated* national and local professionalism it is interesting to note that there are some professional discourses which are *shared* between Gambian teachers and teachers in Europe and North America. My work *internationally* develops the concept that there are *different* situated professional cultures of teaching and at the same time a similar shared professional teaching culture (Knight 1996). These shared reasons for joining the profession and shared professional discourses are summarised in the table below.

**Table 12.4**  
**Shared reasons for joining and remaining in the teaching profession and shared professional discourses (with supporting European and American references)**

<b><i>Shared reasons for joining teaching</i></b>	
• family members who gave encouragement	(Sugrue 1996)
• inspirational childhood teachers	(Knowles 1989)
• to collect pension	(Beynon 1988)
• for social advancement	(Lortie 1975)
• a vocational 'calling'	(Cole 1985; Sugrue 1996)
• for personal intellectual development	(Nias 1989)
• a safe and secure job	(Nias 1989)
• a 'career of last resort' which was 'drifted into'	(Fullan 1991)
<b><i>Shared professional discourses</i></b>	
• sacrifice and commitment	(Nias 1989)
• moral leadership	(Sockett 1993; Bergem 1993)
• 'living inexorably with tension'	(Nias 1988)
• respect for teachers in rural areas	(Sugrue 1996)

I now examine these shared professional discourses in different contexts. This discussion is important because it builds upon the research sighted in the table by

suggesting that these discourses operate in developing countries such as The Gambia. It therefore becomes geographically possible to discuss shared issues of teachers' professionalism in a wider international context than Europe and North America and to include developing countries such as The Gambia.

It is important to note that these *apparent* similarities are culturally situated. Thus for example, the specific nature of morality is qualitatively different in The Gambia because of the differing socio-economic contexts in which these concepts emerge. Such an understanding gives further credence to the notion of a situated professionalism.

### ***12.9 Teachers' shared discourses in different geographical contexts***

In Ireland, Sugrue (1996) found that the influence of an immediate relative played a decisive role in some student teachers' decisions to apply to primary teaching. Similarly in The Gambia the encouragement of relatives to become a teacher was an important reason for Master, Kawsu and Ms. Mansell initially joining the profession. A common theme which arose amongst Gambian student teachers and teachers was their respect and admiration for their childhood teachers. These teachers had inspired them to join and remain in the teaching profession. Similarly Knowles (1989;129) found that student teachers were inspired to become teachers because of their teachers when they were children.

Other Gambian teachers had turned to teaching as a career of 'last choice' because it was very difficult to secure a reliable salary in the poor economic climate of The Gambia. Similarly in the US, Fullan (1991;125) reports that 'teaching was not the first choice of as much as a third of the teaching force (more so at secondary level).'

Some British and Gambian student teachers used teaching for purposes of social mobility and advancement. Lortie (1975), Ozga (1988) and Robertson (1996) argue that teaching as an occupation has been successfully used by the working class for the purposes of *social mobility* through to the middle class.

'Teaching traditionally attracted fractions of the upper working and lower middle classes in what has been an important avenue for social mobility' (Robertson 1996;35).

Similarly 64% of Gambian student teachers were from poor rural farming backgrounds and used teaching for the purposes of social mobility. They aimed to secure a higher standard of living in *urban* areas and to 'develop' themselves.

Despite reluctantly 'drifting' into teaching many Gambian teachers choose to remain in teaching because of their financial commitments and lack of alternate comparably paid work. Similarly in the UK Cole notes that:

'Since a teacher's qualifications and experience are barely transferable to another similarly remunerated occupation,

teachers may well feel that there is a direct link between domestic commitments and continuance in teaching' (Cole 1985;103).

Nearly all Gambia College students qualified and became teachers even though a quarter expressed dissatisfaction with teaching. A poor rural family had sometimes made considerable financial and personal sacrifice to pay for their offspring's High School education to ensure entry into The Gambia College. The student was therefore under obligation to successfully graduate as a qualified teacher and remunerate his/her family. Likewise some UK teachers were 'trapped by financial pressures and lack of alternative employment' (Nias 1988;197). Mr. Camarra, who was 'tired of teaching' wanted to retire but remained to collect his full pension. Mr. Camarra reminded me of Beynon's (1985) Mr. Pickwick who found teaching an 'irksome responsibility' which was necessary to collect his pension.

Several student teachers and teachers complained that their salary would be insufficient to meet their extended families' needs. Mr. Gassama loved the profession but constantly talked of leaving it 'to find better money'. Similarly Nias' teachers

'frequently and cogently expressed dissatisfaction with the conditions of teaching as a career. Yet levels of satisfaction with teaching as an occupation were extremely high' (Nias 1988;206).

Thus my findings are in agreement with Nias who notes primary school teachers' contradictory relationship with teaching.

There are similarities between American student teachers' and Gambian student teachers' professional commitment and sacrifice to children. The student teachers felt that their work was crucial in developing the human resources of The Gambia. Similarly in the US, Young found that student teachers had

'a desire to work with children, wanting to contribute to society by educating children, saw the opportunity to shape the future, share knowledge and ideas. In short, it is by and large the lofty mission of the teaching profession that attracts these high quality students'. (Young1995; 285).

Gambian teachers' altruistic motivations to teach Gambian children were similar to Nias' teachers' in the UK who

'saw themselves as people with a strong concern for the welfare of others; they wanted to improve the lives or life-chances of children' (Nias 1989;32).

Several of the teachers mentioned that they wanted to eradicate illiteracy and thereby poverty from Gambians' lives. Similarly in the UK Nias' teachers' mentioned that they were 'politically committed to making the world a fairer place' (Nias 1989;32). Mr. Sillah felt contented and happy as a teacher because he was fulfilling his patriotic duty of 'moulding Gambian children into productive citizens'. Interestingly Nias' teachers mentioned that they enjoyed 'moulding children'



because they were convinced that they were making 'a valuable contribution to childrens' lives' (Nias 1989;92).

Just as Gambian teachers constantly refer to their 'sacrifice', Nias' teachers speak of their 'commitment' to the job. For Nias this notion of 'commitment' was central to any understanding of primary teachers (Nias 1989:29). Nias notes that this commitment, even amongst the agnostic and atheist teachers in her sample, 'appeared to be influenced by the Christian moral tradition' (Nias 1988;210). Gambian teachers sacrifice and commitment stems from a belief that teaching is a vocational calling which will be rewarded by God.

Similarly Lortie notes that commitment is important to teachers. Lortie makes commitment synonymous with 'involvement', indicating 'a readiness to allocate scarce personal resources' for example time, money and energy to teaching (Lortie 1975;189). Equally Lamin teachers' sacrifice, in terms of time, money and enthusiasm, is central to their professional sense of self.

In The Gambia, as in the US, 'teaching was perceived as a profoundly moral activity' (Fenstermacher 1990;133) and thus 'the moral enterprise of teaching was axiomatic' (Bergem 1993;297). A teaching profession without moral principles was incomprehensible to Mr. Sillah. Similarly Fenstermacher (1990;133) notes that without 'moral principles there is no particular point to teaching'. A 'moral vocabulary' of 'service, duty, responsibility, commitment and care' punctuated

conversations I overheard in the staff room and amongst student teachers (Thomas 1990; Sockett 1993).

The similar and different *situated* professional discourses within an international context requires considerably more investigation. I, however, in conducting a thorough and in-depth ethnographic study of Gambian teachers have helped to make such comparisons possible.<sup>101</sup> This thesis has, in part, served as a critique of the 'victims of poverty discourse' found within some literature on teachers in developing countries (Graham-Brown 1991). The World Bank writing about Sub-Saharan African teachers states that:

'The teaching force lacks motivation and professional commitment...the status of primary school teaching is low and has declined considerably in the past two decades' (Verspoor 1991; 90).

This thesis has questioned such generalised 'cardboard cut outs' (Ball and Goodson 1985) of African Sub-Saharan teachers' lives and careers. In developed countries *altruistic* reasons, such as 'caring for children' and 'generally doing good' tend to be emphasised whereas in developing countries the literature tends towards *functional* reasons such as salary and job security (Yong 1995). This research shows that Gambian teachers have a *variety of complex, shifting altruistic and functional* reasons for joining and remaining in the teaching

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<sup>101</sup> A comparative study which specifically compares UK teachers' professional discourses with teachers' discourses in a developing country would be most illuminating. Most importantly such collaboration would give voice to the southern viewpoint that is all too often excluded from northern perceptions (Choksi and Dyer 1997).

profession. It builds upon the literature concerning teachers' professionalism in developing countries by describing and analysing Gambian teachers' professional discourses.

**Appendix One**

## ***Appendix One***

### ***Gambian Physical and Climatic Conditions***

The Republic of The Gambia lies on the West Coast of Africa facing the Atlantic Ocean. The country consists of a narrow strip of land some ten kilometers wide on either bank of The Gambia River, stretching from its mouth inland and eastward for about 400 kilometers. See Map in this Appendix.

The climate is subtropical with a dry season from mid-November to mid-May and a wet season for the remainder, with most rain falling from June to October. The annual average rainfall varies from 2 meters in the coastal areas to 1 meter inland. However, recent rainfall data indicate that the annual rainfall has been declining steadily over the past thirty years (Social Dimensions of Adjustment 1993).

### ***The Gambian Economic Situation***

The Gambian Gross Domestic Product (GDP) increased by 6% since 1993. However, over the same period the population has risen by 18%. Consequently the GDP per capita in real terms has decreased over this period partly because of the rapid population growth rate. Public Debt servicing at 35% dominated annual Government spending (National Population

Commission Secretariat 1996). In comparison Education received 13% of Government spending and health 7%.

Average annual incomes are approximately £400 (National Population Commission Secretariat 1996). In 1993 the largest employer was agriculture accounting for 65% of employees while 6% were professionals, including teachers. The retail and tourist industry account for most of the other employment.

### ***The Gambian Demographic Situation***

The predominant religion in The Gambia is Islam and polygamy is common. Mandinka is the largest ethno-linguistic group in The Gambia comprising 40% of the population. Other ethno-linguistic groups are the Fula, Wollof, Jola, Serahule and Serer<sup>1</sup> (Tomkinson 1987). In 1993 the population of The Gambia was 1,040,000, growing at an annual rate of 4.1% (National Population Commission Secretariat 1996). The Gambian population has increased by 51% between 1983 and 1993. 41% of the population is aged between 5 and 19 years (Social Dimensions of Adjustment 1993). The infant mortality rate is very high, 140 per 1,000 live births.

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<sup>1</sup> The teachers I interviewed were mainly Mandinka with some Fula and Wollof. In many cases the teachers were tri-lingual. The teachers themselves did not mention their ethno-linguistic groups as having any bearing on their work.

The population of The Gambia is still largely rural (70%) but the latest census shows that the urban proportion has been growing rapidly (Social Dimensions of Adjustment 1993). The urban population has greater incomes, higher levels of female educational attainment and better health. Gambian education gross enrollment figures are low: at primary level, 48% for girls and 59% for boys and at secondary level, 19% for girls and 38% for boys. Poverty is one of the main reasons for this low level of school enrollment (Social Dimensions of Adjustment 1993).

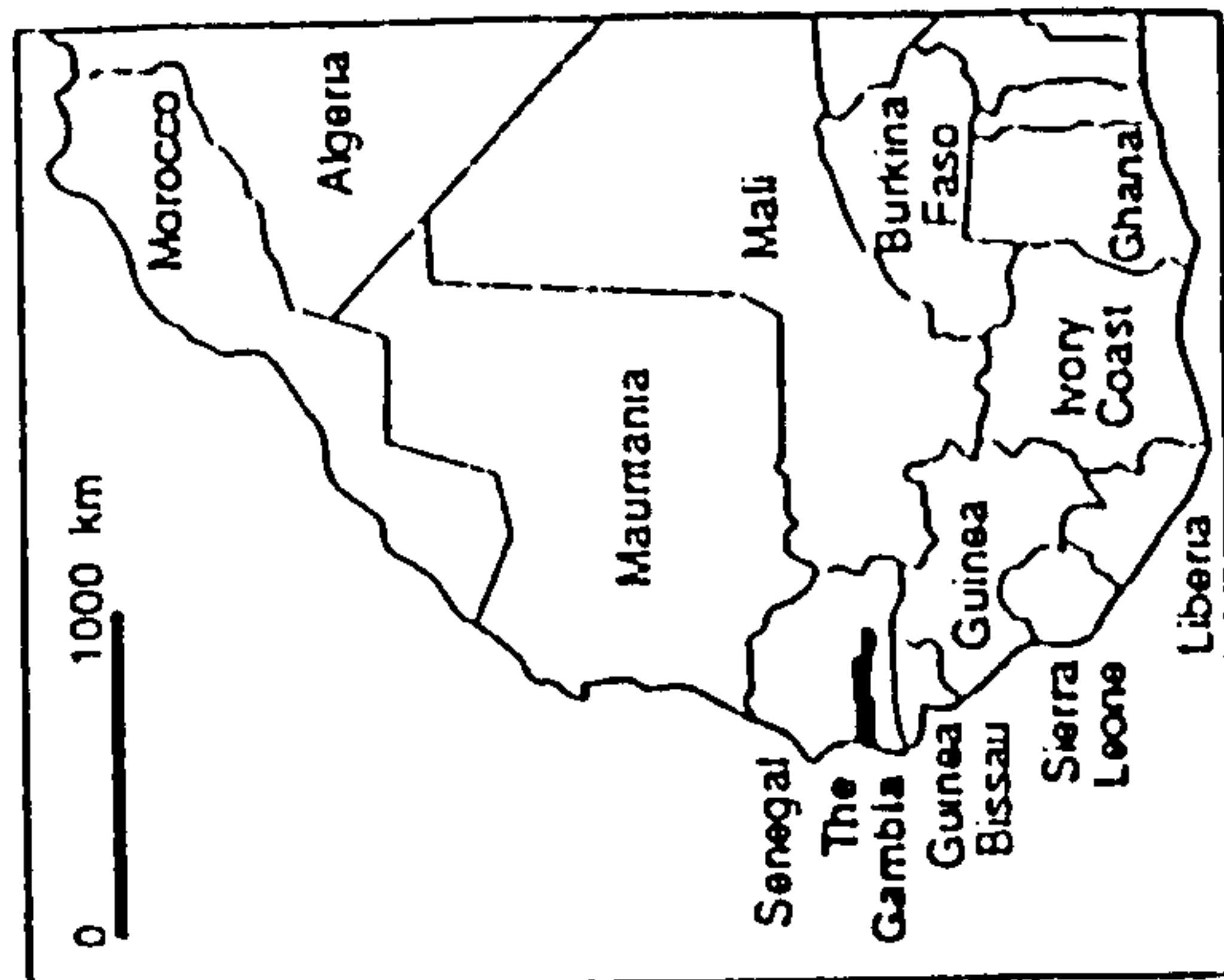
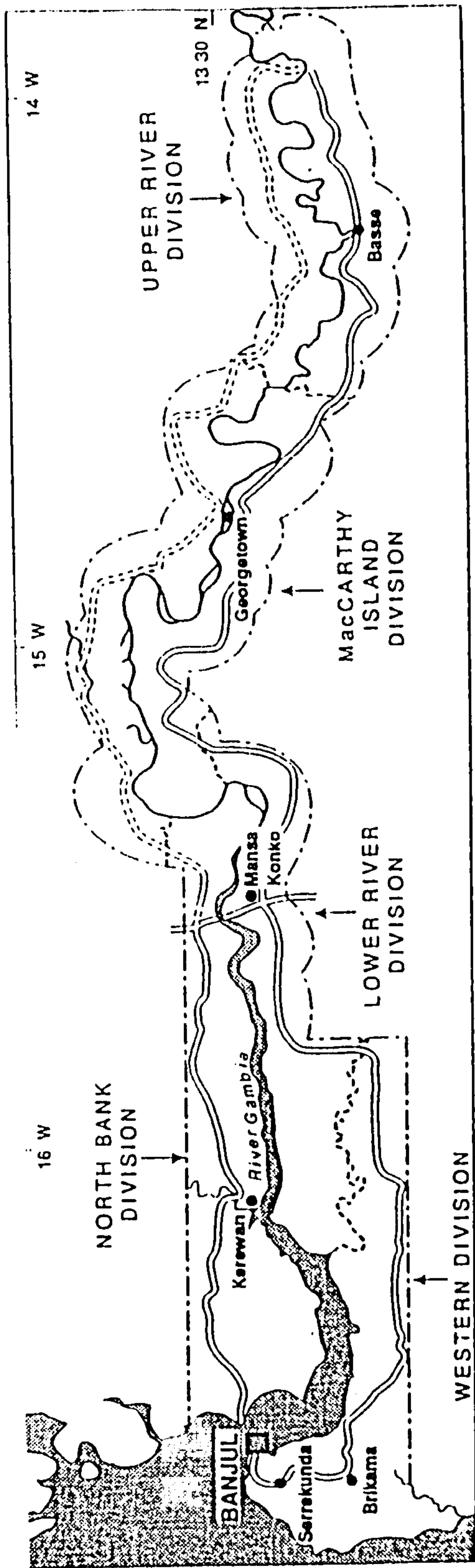
**Appendix Two**



Integrated Pay Scale With Effect From 01/07/98

Grade	Increase Amount	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	Year 6	Year 7	Year 8
1	132 11	4850 405	4992 416	5124 427	5258 438	5388 449	5525 460	5652 471	5784 482
2	156 13	5916 493	6072 506	6228 519	6384 532	6540 545	6696 558	6852 571	7008 584
3	168 14	7058 589	7236 603	7404 617	7572 631	7740 645	7908 659	8076 673	8244 687
4	312 26	8352 695	8664 722	8976 748	9288 774	9600 800	9912 826	10224 852	10536 878
5	396 33	10324 902	11220 935	11616 969	12012 1001	12408 1034	12804 1067	13200 1100	13596 1133
6	468 39	13872 1156	14340 1195	14808 1234	15276 1273	15744 1312	16212 1351	16680 1390	17148 1429
7	468 39	17604 1457	18072 1503	18540 1545	19008 1584	19476 1623	19944 1662	20412 1701	20880 1740
8	480 40	21276 1773	21756 1813	22236 1853	22716 1893	23196 1933	23676 1973	24156 2013	24636 2053
9	480 40	25176 2098	25656 2138 <i>2123</i>	26136 2178	26616 2218	27096 2258	27576 2298	28056 2338	28536 2378
10	636 53	29100 2425	29736 2478	30372 2531	31008 2584	31644 2637	32280 2690	32916 2743	33552 2796
11	780 65	34116 2843	34896 <i>2908</i>	35676 2973	36456 3038	37236 3103	38016 3168	38796 3233	39576 3298
12	936 78	40368 3364	41304 3442	42240 3520	43176 3598	44112 3676	45048 3754	45984 3832	46920 3910

**Appendix Three**



- ==== Metalled road
- International boundary
- Unmetalled road
- Division boundary

Map 1 The Gambia

**Appendix Four**

THE REPUBLIC OF THE GAMBIA



Regional Education Office  
Region II  
Brikama  
Western Division

R2/EDU/ADMIN/VOL.2(169)

3rd July 1996

The Head Master  
Jamisa Primary..  
.....  
School.....  
.....

Dear Sir

RE: DOUBLE SHIFT TEACHING

Being aware of the financial constraints of the Ministry of Education and the supply of schools with ineffective Unqualified or Teacher Aides, it is accepted to introduce Double Shift system of teaching in few selected schools in this Region. This system is viewed to partially serve as an alternative to the supply of the above mentioned calibre of teachers in the school system.

Against this backdrop, I write to inform you that your school has been selected to operate the Double Shift System of teaching. This should become operational with effect from September 1996/97 academic year.

It is however your discretion as the head of the school to determine which of the grade level should be involved and those numbers of staff fully engaged would enjoy the approved incentives and training.

It is therefore anticipated that your reputable commitment and proper coordination will go a long way in making this system functional and effective.

Yours sincerely

.....  
  
MR. KAKAI .E. SANYANG  
FOR: PEO II

cc: Permanent Secretary/MOE  
D.C.E.O/Schools  
D.C.E.O/Planning,  
Principal Accountant/MOE  
File

**Appendix Five**



## MINISTRY OF EDUCATION

Bedford Place Building  
Banjul  
The Gambia

228233 Ext. 102  
Fax: (220) 225068

### INTERNAL MEMORANDUM

From: DCEO/Schools	To: All PEOs (Regions 1 - 6)
	All Heads of Schools
	Date: 11th November 19 96

Please allow Mr Guy Roberts-Holmes (a researcher from the University of Nottingham in U.K) to conduct his PH.D research studies in your Region/institution.

Mr Robert-Holmes lectured at the Gambia College School of Education between 1993 and 1995.

I am sure you will find it interesting to interact with him while he is with you up to the end of January 1997.

MR SAIHOU H O JONES  
FOR: PERMANENT SECRETARY

**Appendix Six**



Questionnaire for Student Teachers at The Gambia College.

I am carrying out some research on student teacher attitudes and student teacher motivations.

I am interested in the reasons that motivated you to come to study at The Gambia College to become a qualified teacher.

I am also interested in the general attitudes that you hold towards the teaching profession.

In order to put your responses in context the first part of the questionnaire asks you questions about your own circumstances and educational background.

Your answers will be treated with the strictest confidence.

Part One                      Background Information

Name ~~.....~~ ~~.....~~ .....

Male.....  ..... or Female.....  ..... (Please tick)

How old are you? 24.....

What is your marital status? (Tick one only)  
Married.....  Single.....  Other.....

Do you have any children?  
Yes.....  If yes, how many children?.....  
No.....

Are you a first or second year student?..... First year.....

Have you taught before you came to The Gambia College?  
Yes.....  No.....

If yes, did you teach in the Kombos or Up-country? .....

How long did you teach for?.....

Part 2

Attitudes towards the Teaching Profession

Reasons for Joining the Teaching Profession

Below there are nine statements as to why you might have chosen to join the teaching profession. Place the following 9 reasons in order from the most important reason to the least important reason.

For example, if the most important reason that you joined the teaching profession is because "Teaching is an interesting job" then place a 1 in the space next to that, and if the second most important reason that you joined the teaching profession is because "Teaching pays a good salary" then place a 2 in the space beside that and so on up to 9 which would be the least important reason that you joined the teaching profession.

There are no right or wrong answers to this question. I just want your opinion as to the relative importance of these 9 reasons. Place a 1 beside the most important reason and so on up to the least important reason which will be 9.

Safe and secure employment.

.....<sup>3</sup>.....

Teaching pays a good salary.

.....~~8~~ 7.....

I want to work with children.

.....~~4~~ 5.....

Encouragement and pressure from family and friends to be a teacher.

.....<sup>6</sup>.....

Easy to get promotion in the teaching profession.

.....<sup>8</sup>.....

To help develop The Gambia.

.....<sup>4</sup>.....

There are not many job choices in rural areas.

.....<sup>9</sup>.....

Teaching is an interesting and stimulating job.

.....<sup>1</sup>.....

I wanted to meet the need for qualified teachers in The Gambia.

.....<sup>2</sup>.....

Now please answer the above question in a different way. Imagine, for example, you had to advise your teenage son or daughter on whether or not they should take up teaching as a profession. Which of the following statements would you say applied these days to the teaching profession? Please tick the appropriate column for each statement as to whether the reason applies or does not apply.

	<u>Applies</u>	<u>Does not apply</u>
Safe and secure employment.....	/	
Easy to get promotion in the teaching profession.....		/
It pays a good salary.....	/	
To help develop The Gambia.....	/	
There are not many job choices in rural areas .....	/	
Teaching is interesting work .....	/	
There is a need for qualified teachers in The Gambia .....	/	

Imagine that you had a teenage son or daughter. Would you advise him/her to take up teaching?

Yes...../..... No.....

Why?

Because teaching is a noble profession, and whilst you are teaching, you learn a lot from the pupils/students as they also learn from you

Would you like to stay in the teaching profession for most of your life?

Yes...../..... No.....

If no, what job would you like to do if the opportunity arose?

.....

Part 3

Teacher Motivation

I am interested in those factors that MOTIVATE you to do a good job of teaching.

Please tell me the order of importance of the following 12 factors that motivate you to work hard and to do your job properly. If for example you think that 'small classes' is the most important factor for your work, you should put a 1 in the space alongside it; if you think that a good school relationship with the community is the second most important you should put a 2 in the space provided and so on up to 12 which motivates you the least in your work. There are no right or wrong answers to this question, I simply want to know what is the relative importance of the following twelve factors.

The high status which teaching is held in	.....11.....
Good school administration and policies	.....4.....
Good staff relations	.....5.....
A posting to a school located in an area offering better living conditions	.....1.....
Small classes	.....8.....
Long holidays	.....12.....
Good discipline	.....9.....
Knowing that education is helping to develop The Gambia.	.....2.....
Good school facilities (buildings, equipment, materials)	.....3.....
Good teaching salaries and allowances	.....6.....
Professional growth/promotion/further education	.....7.....
Good school relationship with the community	.....10.....

How satisfying do you find teaching? Tick one of the following.

- Very unsatisfactory .....
- Unsatisfactory .....
- Alright, O.K. ....
- Satisfactory .....1.....
- Very satisfactory .....

Why?

..... Because the Government and donor agencies  
 are trying to help teachers in their career,  
 despite although there are still problems confronting teach

How do rate the importance of the following factors as sources of DISSATISFACTION in your work? Rate each one either as

- 1 Very important in making me dissatisfied with teaching.
- 2 Important in making me dissatisfied with teaching.
- 3 Of average importance in making me dissatisfied with teaching.
- 4 Not very important in making me dissatisfied with teaching.
- 5 Totally unimportant in making me dissatisfied with teaching.

For example if you find that "Large Classes" are very important in making you dissatisfied with teaching then a place a 1 next to that, and if you find that "Weak school administration" is totally unimportant in making you dissatisfied with teaching then you should write a 5 next to that and so on for all the following factors. Place a 1,2,3,4, or 5 next to all the following factors depending on how you rate them. A 1 shows that factor which gives you the most dissatisfaction with teaching and a 5 the least dissatisfaction.

Poor student discipline	.....1.....
Weak school administration	.....2.....
Lack of cooperation from members of staff	.....2.....
Large classes	.....3.....
Low standard of pupils work	.....5.....
Too many teaching hours	.....3.....
Too small a monthly salary	.....1.....
Being posted to undesirable locations	.....5.....
Too many extra-curricula activities	.....5.....
Too long school terms	.....5.....
Too many meetings	.....5.....
Too frequent transfers to new schools	.....5.....
Too many curriculum changes	.....5.....
Lack of textbooks and equipment etc	.....1.....
Being posted up-country	.....5.....
Delay in payment of salaries and other allowances	.....2.....
Lack of accommodation	.....2.....
Limited opportunity for promotion	.....1.....
Teachers who do not deserve promotion, get promoted	.....1.....

How does teaching compare with other types of jobs in The Gambia?

Tick one of the following.

- Very well .....
- Well .....
- About the same .....
- Poorly ....1....
- Very poorly .....

How do you feel about teaching, does it rate as an important job to you or as an unimportant job? Tick one of the following.

Very important .....1.....  
Important .....  
Not very important .....  
Unimportant .....

Why?..... Because..... for a country to develop, Education should be first of all developed, otherwise development will fail.

How satisfied are you with a qualified teacher's salary? Tick one of the following

Very satisfied .....  
Satisfied .....  
Alright, OK. ....1.....  
Not satisfied .....  
Dissatisfied .....  
Very dissatisfied.....

Why?.....  
.....

How satisfied are you with your chances of promotion? Tick one of the following

Very satisfied .....  
Satisfied .....  
Alright, OK. .....  
Not satisfied ....1.....  
Dissatisfied .....  
Very dissatisfied.....

Why?..... Because..... compared with other jobs, one will be teaching for five or six years without being <sup>promoted</sup> ~~transferred~~ This is boring.

Is there anything else about teaching that you would like to tell me?

Yes, teachers should be ~~rece~~ recommended and rank high rather than ranking their status low. They should be well paid.

**Appendix Seven**

THE A, B, C, OF A TEACHER'S DUTY- - A SET OF TEACHERS!  
RESOLUTIONS FOR REGION TWO SCHOOL:

- A. Arrive at school early every day and arrange work.
- B. Begin work in time diligently, honestly and thoroughly.
- C. Co-operate with all children, colleagues and the headmaster.
- D. Don't neglect to prepare and teach lessons successfully.
- E. Educate pupils morally, intellectually and physically.
- F. Face all cases of delinquencies in the school with sympathy.
- G. Give help to all needy children.
- H. Help to raise tone and the discipline of the school.
- I. Insist on neat work proper lettering of pupil's work.
- J. Judge the work of children fairly.
- K. Know beforehand what to teach pupils.
- L. Learn all the essential methods of teaching, this is vital.
- M. Maintain a high standard of work every time.
- N. Never go against the constituted authority of the school.
- O. Obviate all cases of disobedience, rudeness, and truancy.
- P. Practise all lessons before delivery.
- Q. Questions should be evenly and rightly distributed to children.
- R. Record the significant stages in each child's development.
- S. See that children maintain order in the classroom.
- T. Train children to know their duties.
- U. Use verbal, written materials and pictorial illustrations.
- V. Vary teaching methods. This is important.
- W. Watch children and know how to approach them.
- Y. Yield not to weak suggestions.
- Z. Zest in our work, makes the children happy and our work more enjoyable, more effective, and easier to cope with.



## **Appendix Eight**



Direct line

Our reference

Our reference

Date

2 April, 1996

JENUNG MANNEH, The Principal, The Gambia College,  
Brikama Campus,  
The Republic of The Gambia.

SCHOOL of  
EDUCATION

Dear JENUNG MANNEH, THE PRINCIPAL, THE GAMBIA COLLEGE,

I hope all is well with you and The Gambia College. My name is Guy Roberts-Holmes and as you may recall I had the good fortune to work as an English Methodology Lecturer at The Gambia College 1993-1995 employed by VSO/ODA, Voluntary Service Overseas & Overseas Development Agency. Thank you very much for all your support and encouragement during those two excellent years. Both Pamela Kea (Gender Studies Lecturer) and myself enjoyed working at The Gambia College very much indeed. We both send you our warmest greetings to you and your Staff.

University Park  
Nottingham  
NG7 2RD

Telephone  
(0115) 951 5151

Facsimile  
(0115) 979 1506

I am now an Educational Researcher employed by the School of Education, University of Nottingham to carry out an International Comparative Research thesis concerning Teachers' Careers. I wish to develop my knowledge and understanding of Teaching Careers in The Gambia that I gained whilst working at The College. I will place this knowledge within the international context of teaching careers. If you kindly grant me your permission, I would very much like to return to The Gambia College to find out more about Gambian Teaching Careers. I hope to be in The Gambia from September 1996 to March 1997. I hope that I may be able to develop fruitful links between The Gambia College/University and The School of Education, University of Nottingham.

I have written to The Permanent Secretary and The Director of Schools, Ministry of Education informing them of my work.

I eagerly await your reply,  
Thank you very much in advance for your help.

*Guy Roberts-Holmes*

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