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# Understanding the Professional Lives of Female Teachers in Rural Sub- Saharan African Schools: A Capability Perspective

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A Thesis submitted to the Faculty of Education and Language Studies, The  
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## Abstract

This study examines an important dimension of the global challenge to achieve Education for All: the professional lives of female teachers in rural communities in Sub-Saharan Africa. Teachers from five countries (Ghana, Nigeria, Kenya, South Africa and Sudan) provide a focus for exploring the relationship between official representations of teachers' work and the professional lives teachers create and experience.

The official perspective is drawn from an analysis of documentary evidence and interviews with policy makers and officials. Teachers' perspectives are derived from an ethnographic and narrative analysis of data collected during fieldwork in schools. The thesis is framed by the capability approach. It compiles lists of professional capabilities for each perspective and examines teachers' agency to pursue and achieve these capabilities.

The thesis establishes that:

- the capability approach provides a frame of reference for understanding the professional lives of teachers. In particular it highlights disconnections between official and teacher perceptions of the teacher role and teacher effectiveness and makes visible patterns of agency teachers have within their professional lives.
- the predominantly deficit model of teacher work in Sub-Saharan Africa expressed in policy documentation and the literature fails to take account of the more complex ways in which female working lives are situated; for example the intersection of professional values with rurality and gender.
- teachers do not necessarily perceive rurality in negative terms, but rather the 'conditions of support' associated with rurality. This defines a further dimension to teacher agency and has implications for re-examining the professional and administrative structures within which teachers work.

The thesis concludes by proposing a model of professional capability for female teachers working in rural communities in Sub-Saharan Africa in a form that could engage research and policy communities, and suggesting grounds for re-thinking policy orientations to teachers working in such contexts.

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## List of acronyms

AA	Agency achievement
AF	Agency freedom
AIDS	Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome
ARVs	Antiretrovirals
BEd	Bachelor of Education
DFID	Department for International Development
ECOWAS	Economic Community of West African States
EDI	Education Development Index
EFA	Education for All
GES	Ghana Education Service
GMR	Global Monitoring Report
HDI	Human Development Index
HIPC	Heavily Indebted Poor Country
HIV	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
IICBA	International Institute for Capacity Building in Africa (UNESCO)
IIEP	International Institute for Education Planning (UNESCO)
IRIN	Integrated Regional Information Networks
ISCED	International Standard Classification of Education
MDG(s)	Millennium Development Goal(s)
NAPTOSA	National Professional Teachers' Organisation of South Africa
NCE	National Certificate of Education (Nigeria)
NMF	Nelson Mandela Foundation
OC	Official capability
OCHA	Office for the Coordination of Human Affairs (UN)
OER	Open Educational Resource
OU	Open University
PhD	Doctor of Philosophy
PQTR	Pupil-Qualified Teacher Ratio
PRSP	Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper
PTA	Parent Teacher Association
PTR	Pupil-Teacher Ratio
SACE	South African Council for Educators
SADTU	South Africa Democratic Teachers' Union
SAPRIN	Structural Adjustment Participatory Review International Network
TESSA	Teacher Education in Sub-Saharan Africa
TGC	Teacher-generated capability
TI	Transparency International
TTISSA	Teacher Training Initiative in Sub-Saharan Africa (UNESCO)
UIS	UNESCO Institute for Statistics
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNESCO	United Nations Education, Scientific and Cultural Organisation
UN-HABITAT	United Nations Human Settlement Programme
UPE	Universal Primary Education
VSO	Voluntary Service Overseas

## Chapter 1 Introduction



### 1.1 Setting the scene for the study

Towards the end of 2007 I spent six weeks in South Africa's Eastern Cape carrying out research for the TESSA (Teacher Education in Sub-Saharan Africa)<sup>1</sup> Teachers' Lives project. The project focused on female teachers' work in rural schools. One day I visited two farm schools. They were almost identical in terms of extreme remoteness, decrepit infrastructure and limited resources; a set up I was becoming bleakly accustomed to. What took place at each school, however, could not have been more different.

I arrived at the first school just before 10am. My journey had been gruelling: two hours of un-tarred roads pushing deep into the Katberg Mountains, with the last two-mile stretch only just passable in a Land Rover. The two teachers had already been there for an hour, although their journey had taken three hours, much of it on foot. It was bitterly cold and the wind howled around the single classroom.

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<sup>1</sup> See [www.tessafrica.net](http://www.tessafrica.net). Chapter 3, section 3.1 also provides a brief overview of TESSA.

The teachers unlocked a cupboard where a few old textbooks were carefully stacked and proceeded to conduct a Mathematics lesson, raising their voices above the sound of rain on the corrugated iron roof. The topic was angles and the teachers leapt about the room 'making' angles with their arms and legs. The pupils, shyly at first, then laughingly, joined in. Despite the limited resources the teachers had a well worked out plan. The pupils were engaged, and learning.

Later that day I drove a few miles south to another school. I had arranged to meet the head teacher but there was no sign of her. A few bored-looking children were leaning against the water tank, a handful more were listlessly kicking a deflated football against a wall. I asked them where I could find the head, they said she hadn't turned up but there was another teacher I could talk to. A boy led me past classrooms with desks upturned, broken chairs flung to the sides of the room. The date written on one blackboard was from four months earlier. Another room housed a sea of damp, damaged textbooks, strewn ankle-deep and sticky with spiders' webs.

We arrived at a room with a boarded-up window. The boy knocked but there was no answer. He knocked again and there was a shout from inside. Awkwardly I suggested that I come back another day but the boy said to wait because the teacher was definitely in there. He shouted something in Xhosa and after an uncomfortable length of time a bolt slid back and the door opened. The teacher stared through half-closed eyes. He swayed and caught the doorframe for support. As he stepped out of the room he stumbled, slurring apologies. A bottle of whiskey sat on the table behind him.

Teachers' Lives offered many insights into the professional and personal lives of teachers, but experiences like this one fascinated and troubled me. They confirmed my

understandings of some of the literature around wide variations in the motivation and effectiveness of teachers, but the more I observed the more I began to sense that that these issues were more nuanced than this literature implied. Why do some teachers trek for hours through a storm to deliver a well-planned lesson to a handful of pupils? Why do others not turn up to work? Why do some spend the day at school without teaching? What do teachers think 'good teaching' is and why? This doctoral study is an attempt to explore these issues in depth.

## **1.2 The research context**

The provision of basic education for all children by 2015 is one of the world's major educational goals, articulated by the Education for All (EFA) agenda in 1990 and Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) in 2000. Crucial to this goal are the recruitment, education, training and retention of teachers. This represents a major challenge across the world but particularly in Sub-Saharan Africa where over two thirds of the 1.9 million additional teachers required to meet this goal are needed. Sub-Saharan Africa also needs to train and recruit a further 5 million teachers to replace those who will retire or leave the profession before 2015 (UNESCO, 2010). These figures do not include the professional development needs of existing teachers; several reports point to the large number of unqualified teachers in schools, and in rural primary schools in particular (Mulkeen and Chen, 2008; UNESCO, 2005; 2008).

A consideration of teachers, however, came late to the international education agenda. In the first phase of EFA international organisations and national governments focused primarily on provision (for example building schools) and access (the removal or

subsidisation of school-fees). Primary enrolment in Sub-Saharan Africa increased five times faster between 1990-2005 than between 1975-1990, but no targets were set for increasing the number of teachers to teach the rapidly expanding school populations (UNESCO, 2010).

Concerns about the quality of education (and the quality of teachers and teaching) began to emerge as a decline in pupil achievement in Literacy, Numeracy and Science was reported in these expanding systems. In 2000 over 1000 participants at the World Education Forum in Senegal adopted the Dakar Framework for Action, reaffirming their commitment to achieving EFA by 2015. The framework drew attention to the relationship between teachers and quality and outlined teachers' roles as: '...essential players in promoting quality education, whether in schools or in more flexible community-based programmes; they are advocates for, and catalysts of, change.' It also claimed 'no education reform is likely to succeed without the active participation and ownership of teachers' (UNESCO, 2000: paragraph 69).

Throughout the 2000s, the focus on education quality and teaching gained momentum. UNESCO's 2005 EFA Global Monitoring Report was called EFA: The Quality Imperative. In the same year UNESCO launched TTISSA (Teacher Training Initiative for Sub-Saharan Africa) and reoriented the focus of UNESCO-IICBA (International Institute for Capacity Building in Africa) towards capacity building in teacher education. Nationally, governments have raised minimum qualifications for teaching<sup>2</sup>, expanded provision for in-service teacher education, redesigned curricula and shifted expectations of pedagogical approaches to teaching and learning. There has also been a drive to recruit more women

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<sup>2</sup> The Pupil-Teacher Ratio (PTR) used to represent teacher availability and deployment is sometimes replaced by the Pupil-Qualified Teacher Ratio (PQTR). In Malawi, for example, the average PTR is 1:56 but the average PQTR is 1:114 (Mulkeen, 2006).

into teaching: the theme of World Teachers' Day in 2011 was Teachers for Gender Equality. This aimed to increase awareness of the role women teachers play in facilitating equality and quality in schools.

In millions of classrooms, where these global and national campaigns are focused and where data for these large-scale statistics are collected, are the teachers: '...it is what teachers do or fail to do that determines the bottom-line index of the success of educational policies' (Obanya, 2010:34). Yet studies of teachers have found that they rarely feel actively involved in these policy changes, nor do they feel a sense of ownership of them (Barrett, 2005a; Harley et al, 2000). Teacher status in Sub-Saharan Africa is said to have declined over the past half century and teaching, particularly at the primary level, is often considered to be a last-resort occupation. Regular strikes across the continent demonstrate teachers' dissatisfaction with their work and working conditions<sup>3</sup>. Teacher shortages and absences are reportedly common and especially acute in rural schools which are more likely to have insufficient infrastructure and resources, poor quality (or no) housing for teachers and where teachers are more likely to feel socially and professionally isolated (Hedges, 2002). The organisation Voluntary Service Overseas (VSO) devoted a decade to researching teacher motivation and concluded that most teachers had very little (VSO, 2002; 2007; 2008; 2009).

The TESSA Teachers' Lives project – which focused on women teachers – suggested that issues around teachers' work are more nuanced than is often portrayed in existing policy and academic literature (Buckler, 2009a; Buckler, 2011; Moon and Buckler, 2007). The

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<sup>3</sup> Kenyan teachers went on strike in September 2011 (Shinundu, 2011) and in January 2009 (BBC, 2009). Ghanaian teachers went on strike in May 2011 (Alhassan, 2011), March 2011 (Kokutse, 2011), March 2009 (GNA, 2009) and September 2006 (GNA, 2006). South African teachers went on strike in August 2010 (Cape Argus, 2010) and June 2007 (Slaughter, 2007). Teachers in the Democratic Republic of the Congo have reportedly gone on strike every year since 2005 (IRIN, 2011).

data implied that teachers have clear objectives in their work that draw on a range of influences: their own schooling, their experiences as parents, pre-conceived understandings of teaching and learning, their knowledge of the community they taught in and their religious beliefs. These objectives only sometimes resonated with those written in their job description and the international agendas to which their countries subscribed. These teachers were motivated, but their motivation was not always directed towards the pursuit of objectives expected by their employers. These teachers were qualified, but often appeared not to utilise the range of pedagogical approaches they had been taught. In short, for all of the attention focused on quality in education, Teachers' Lives suggested that there are differences between how teachers' work is interpreted by teachers and policy makers and differences between what is considered to be good quality teaching from these two perspectives.

### **1.3 Research aims, scope and questions**

The primary aims of this study were to reach a better understanding of what is valued in female teachers' work in rural classrooms in Sub-Saharan Africa and of what teachers are able to do in their work. It sought to bridge a gap in existing understandings around teachers' experiences of their work.

A prominent and useful body of research exploring teachers' relationship with their profession has focused on teacher identity (e.g. Barrett, 2008; Jessop and Penny, 1998; Welmond, 2002) but while this focus facilitates an understanding of teachers' values and perceptions of teaching, it cannot fully explain what teachers are able to do: just because a teacher feels strongly about particular goals in their work, it does not mean they are able to



actively pursue and achieve these goals. The literature focusing on teacher effectiveness often presents an intangible definition of effectiveness (e.g. Towse et al, 2002) and rarely considers what teachers think effective teaching is (e.g. Onderi and Croll, 2009). Literature focusing on teacher motivation (e.g. VSO, 2002) suggests that teachers are not motivated but presumes that teachers and their employers share the same objectives and tends to focus on what de-motivates rather than motivates teachers – these are not necessarily two sides of the same coin.

This thesis draws these strands of literature together by aiming to understand not only what is valued in teachers' work (from both official and teachers' perspectives) but also the extent to which teachers are able to pursue and achieve the things that are valued. It does this by exploring teachers' professional lives using the capability approach.

The capability approach was originally conceived by the economist and philosopher Amartya Sen as an alternative method of measuring poverty. Rather than evaluate what a person has, the capability approach evaluates what a person is able to do or be, and the freedom – or capability – they have to achieve specific 'functionings'. Functionings are defined as 'the various things a person may value doing or being' (Sen, 1999:75) so the capability approach provides a lens for evaluating a person's freedom from poverty and freedom to live the life they value. While the capability approach has traditionally been used to frame issues of human welfare (focusing on the pursuit of things that enhance personal well-being) this study develops a concept of professional capabilities for teachers, that is, the pursuit of things that are valued in their work.

In this study the approach will be used to evaluate the capability teachers have to do their jobs. While capability perspectives are increasingly used in education studies (see for

example Rubagiza et al, 2011; Tikly and Barrett, 2011; Walker, 2006; Unterhalter, 2003) they primarily evaluate the extent to which education expands or restricts the capabilities of students. By contrast this thesis explores the usefulness and limitations of the capability approach as a framework for understanding teachers' professional lives and evaluating their freedom to pursue and achieve valued professional functionings.

This study also intends to contribute to the re-conceptualisation of ideas around quality in teachers' work. The thesis argues that the term quality, as it is used in official documents around education, often offers unsatisfactory insights into teaching and learning at the classroom level. Alexander (2008) criticises 'quality indicators' from a range of high-profile, international education organisations and finds that at best they leave 'important methodological questions unanswered' (p.vii) and, at worst, are so vague they 'lose all remnants of credibility' (p.5). He goes on to argue that 'those who frame indicators of quality continue to operate in a highly arbitrary way without reference either to a reasoned pedagogical framework or to evidence about which aspects of pedagogy are most critical to the pursuit of learning' (p.39). Using the capability approach to frame teachers' work represents a shift away from how quality is defined in human capital and rights-based approaches and towards an alternative approach based on social justice (Tikly and Barrett, 2011)<sup>4</sup>.

The thesis argues that education is a shared process towards social justice and that Ministries of Education and teachers are jointly responsible for education that engages children, maximises their potential and enriches their lives. Viewed from a social justice

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<sup>4</sup> The thesis acknowledges that social justice has multiple interpretations across cultures and disciplines (UN, 2006). In this study social justice is understood as a concept that 'understands and values human rights and recognises the dignity of every human being' (Mwaniku, 2012:216), is informed by local and democratic debate and is best enacted through relational rather than redistributive means (Cuervo, 2012).

perspective, good teaching should encompass the pursuit of national and local goals (Barrett and Tikly, 2010), and therefore, ideas about what constitutes good teaching should be drawn from national and local perspectives<sup>5</sup>. Similarly, while large-scale quantitative data is important to inform the quality debate at national and international levels, qualitative analyses of classrooms and education contexts are crucial in order to understand local perspectives around quality and to understand how national and international ideas around quality are perceived by real teachers in real classrooms (Buckler, 2011; Buckler and Bonnet, 2009; Sanyal, 2010; Tao, 2009).

This study presents alternative understandings of education quality and good teaching by using a qualitative research approach framed by contemporary ideas around capabilities to draw out what is valued and what is possible in teachers' work. It explores what is valued from official perspectives through the analysis of national documents around teachers and primary education and interviews with education officials and considers these alongside the perspectives of teachers themselves. It focuses on seven female teachers working in rural schools in five countries in Sub-Saharan Africa (Ghana, Nigeria, Kenya, South Africa and Sudan).

The study is organised around five research questions:

- i. How are teachers' roles officially understood in Sub-Saharan Africa and what do governments value in teachers' work?
- ii. How do female teachers in rural Sub-Saharan African primary schools understand their role and what do they value in their work?

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<sup>5</sup> In this thesis, as in Barrett and Tikly (2010), 'local' is used to determine the immediate communities within which schools are located.

- iii. To what extent are female teachers in rural schools able to pursue and achieve valued aspects of teaching?
- iv. What new insights can the capability approach provide into researching the professional lives of teachers and what are the limitations of this approach?
- v. To what extent could the capability approach influence the way educational governance operates in relation to teachers?

Section 1.4 explains how these questions are addressed.

## **1.4 Structure of the thesis**

### *Chapter 2 Literature review and theoretical framework*

Chapter 2 reviews relevant literature around teachers and their professional lives in Sub-Saharan Africa and critically examines existing approaches that seek to understand how teachers make sense of their work. It identifies gaps in this literature and these approaches and shows how these gaps inspired the first three research questions. The chapter then introduces the capability approach as an alternative perspective. It suggests that exploring what is valued in teachers' work, from both official and teachers' perspectives, and exploring teachers' pursuit of what is valued through a framework based on the capability approach might offer new insights into the professional lives of teachers. It shows how the final two research questions were formulated to respond to the use of this approach.

### *Chapter 3 Methodology*

Chapter 3 sets out the methodological approach and situates the study within a qualitative research paradigm. It explains how the empirical data collection drew on ethnographic and narrative approaches in order to foreground teachers' perspectives and complement these with thick descriptions of the environments in which they live and work. It explains how these approaches helped to understand what teachers value and their freedom to pursue these valued objectives. This chapter describes how the five focus countries were chosen, how participants from these countries were selected to be involved in the study and how national documents were sourced. It also explains how the data was analysed in line with the capability approach and describes the ethical issues and intellectual limitations resulting from the chosen methods of data collection and framework of analysis.

### *Chapter 4 Teachers' professional lives: Official perspectives*

Chapter 4 provides a synthesis of the data collected around official values in teachers' work. It responds specifically to the first research question and provides a backdrop for the final question. It explores the official context within which Sub-Saharan African teachers' professional lives are situated by drawing on national documents around education and interview data with policy makers and education officials from the five focus countries. This chapter reveals what is officially valued in teachers' work and presents a list of official professional capabilities and functionings.

### *Chapter 5 Teachers' professional lives: Teachers' perspectives*

Chapter 5 focuses on what is valued in the work of teachers from the perspectives of the teachers themselves. In doing so it answers the second research question. Drawing on the teachers' narratives and field-notes it provides in-depth descriptions of the different environments in which the teachers work and the pathways they have followed into the

teaching profession. A list of teacher-generated professional capabilities and functionings (drawn from the teachers' narratives, field-notes, focus groups and questionnaires) is presented and the chapter discusses how this compares to the official list.

#### *Chapter 6 Teachers' agency to pursue and achieve valued goals*

Chapter 6 explores the teachers' agency to pursue and achieve what is valued in their work from the two perspectives revealed in chapters 4 and 5. This is the main analysis chapter and responds to the third research question. It applies the framework outlined in chapter 3 at three levels. It analyses teachers' agency to pursue and achieve officially valued and teacher-generated professional capabilities as well as their own, personal valued functionings. These analyses provide insights into teachers' agency freedom as well as the choices they make in their work.

#### *Chapter 7 New perspectives on teachers' professional lives, agency and capabilities in Sub-Saharan Africa*

Chapter 7 addresses the penultimate research question by drawing together the data and analysis presented in chapters 4-6. It offers insights into what these tell us about what is valued in female teachers' work and what they are able to do in rural schools in Sub-Saharan Africa and considers how these findings were facilitated by the use of the capability approach. It also considers the limitations of using the capability approach to understand teachers' professional lives. Finally it presents a model of teachers' professional capability.

*Chapter 8 The educational governance of female teachers in rural Sub-Saharan African schools: Reflections and conclusions*

Chapter 8 concludes the thesis. It presents the arguments and suggestions around teachers' professional capabilities outlined in chapter 7 in a way that has relevance for those involved in the educational governance of teachers in Sub-Saharan Africa. This chapter also expands the model of teachers' professional capabilities by mapping the empirical findings of the study onto the version presented in chapter 7 and suggesting how this model might engage research and policy communities working in the field of teachers and education.

Interspersed between the chapters are seven cameos. Each cameo depicts an aspect of the teachers' professional lives.

## *Cameo 1 A farm in a classroom*

(Kijani, Kenya)

Kijani School perches on a hillside surrounded by tea fields which stretch as far as the eye can see. It is likely that most of the children who leave Kijani will go on to work in these fields and the head teacher makes room in the year 5 and 6 time-table for farming lessons. But what, thinks Cecilia, about the children who drop out before then? How will they work and, more importantly, how will they feed themselves?

'Children leave and do not come back and instead work on the farms. Some might have some skills from their parents, but many are orphans. So I thought I would set up a farm to help these children. If they drop out then at least they will have the skills to be employed and feed themselves and it will save them going to beg in the city. They may not be educated but at least they will be self-sufficient.'

Cecilia dug up a corner of her classroom, borrowed pots from her neighbours and bought some seeds from the market. When I visited the school in 2007 the plants, mainly beans and maize, were young but Cecilia hoped that when the plants grew the children would be able to sell them to the other teachers and earn some money from their work.

When I returned to Kijani in 2009 Cecilia's class had grown from 30 pupils to nearly 70. Desks filled the room, wall-to-wall, and there was no evidence that the classroom farm had ever existed: 'Now there is no time for farming, no room for farming.'



## Chapter 2 Literature review and theoretical framework

### **2.1 Introduction**

This chapter summarises and analyses the available literature around teachers and the teaching profession in Sub-Saharan Africa. It shows how the questions for this study were raised and how the guiding ideas for exploring these questions were determined. First, to give a sense of context, section 2.2 reviews the empirical literature on teachers and teaching in Sub-Saharan Africa. Section 2.3 explores different approaches that have been used to understand teachers' professional lives. Section 2.4 sets out the guiding ideas for this study and shows how these ideas will help to answer the research questions. Section 2.5 concludes the chapter.

### **2.2 A review of the literature on teachers and teaching in Sub-Saharan Africa**

There are three important things to note in regards to how the literature on teachers and teaching in Sub-Saharan Africa relates to this study. First, while official conditions of service (for example policies around salaries or deployment) differ between countries it appears that many experiences of the teaching profession are common to teachers across the region. However, country-specific examples are noted where possible.

Secondly there are key differences between teaching at the primary and secondary levels. Secondary schools, for example, are reported to be better resourced and staffed by more qualified teachers and a higher status tends to be attributed to secondary school teachers.

This study is focusing specifically on the primary education sector<sup>6</sup>. While some findings are relevant to primary and secondary school teachers, this review will attempt to make clear where information is specific to the primary level.

Thirdly, this study is especially interested in female teachers in rural areas. Some studies presented in section 2.2.1 do not disaggregate data by school location or consider teacher gender in the analysis. While some findings are relevant across locations and for both male and female teachers this review will also attempt to make clear where information is specific to female teachers in rural areas. This is dealt with in more detail in section 2.2.2 which specifically focuses on rural teaching. Section 2.2.3 re-focuses the literature to consider how teaching is reportedly experienced by female teachers and to explain why this study focuses on them in particular.

### ***2.2.1 The primary school teaching profession in Sub-Saharan Africa***

Teachers appear to have been highly respected in Africa until at least the mid 20<sup>th</sup> century. A VSO report asserts that until 50 years ago teachers were perceived as cultured, well-educated beacons of society. They played key roles in local communities and, because they educated future elites, were seen as ‘bringers of progress, modernity and development’ (VSO, 2002:20). Much of the literature about teachers in Africa claims that teacher status has declined over the last half century (Bennell, 2004; UNESCO 2009; VSO, 2002; 2009; Welmond, 2002).

Inevitably such a change is due to a complex range of economic, political and social factors. Independence from European countries (in the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s) created

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<sup>6</sup> Sometimes referred to as basic education. Both refer to compulsory, formal schooling attended by children between the approximate ages of 5-12 years.

a need for educated labour to fill positions previously held by colonial staff. Teachers constituted a large body of educated personnel and many left the teaching profession for administrative positions in the public and private sectors (Adelabu, 2005). Those that stayed in teaching were re-imagined as second-string public servants (Obanya, 1999).

Post-independence governments championed basic education and expanded school provision and, in line with regional UNESCO targets for universal primary education (UPE) by 1980 (King and Rose, 2005; McGrath, 2010), pupil enrolment grew through the 1970s. It continued to grow through the 1980s and 1990s against a backdrop of financial constraints and economic restructuring across the region<sup>7</sup>. Restructuring contributed to text book and resource shortages, the dilapidation of schools, cuts to teachers' salaries and a temporary reversal of free education policies (Kraus, 1991). In the midst of this restructuring, representatives from 155 countries met at the 1990 EFA conference in Jomtien (Thailand) to commit to universalise primary education and reduce illiteracy before the end of the decade. This commitment was re-established at the 2000 EFA conference in Dakar (Senegal) and galvanised by the MDGs for education. A key goal of both the EFA and MDG agendas aims that by 2015 all boys and girls will be able to complete a full course of primary schooling (UNDP, 2010). The EFA framework also emphasises that this course of primary schooling should be free and of good quality (UNESCO, 2010).

These commitments led to the removal of parental obligation to pay school fees in many countries, creating a surge in enrolments. Across the world, between 1999 and 2006, the number of out of primary school children fell from 103 million to 73 million (UNDP, 2010). Existing teacher-training structures could not meet this demand and Ministries of

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<sup>7</sup> This restructuring – or Structural Adjustment - was coordinated by the World Bank and advocated cuts in public spending. In Ghana, for example, public expenditure on education was cut from 3.9% of GDP in 1970 to 0.85% in 1983 (SAPRIN, 2002).

Education recruited thousands of unqualified, untrained teachers. These teachers were frequently employed on temporary contracts and paid less than half the salary of qualified teachers. Despite this there are still chronic teacher shortages across the continent. On World Teachers' Day, 2010, UNESCO announced that Sub-Saharan Africa needs to recruit an additional 306,000 teachers a year to achieve EFA by 2015 (UNESCO, 2010).

Over the last decade the issue of quality has dominated the international education agenda, in part attributed to the 2005 UNESCO Global Monitoring Report (GMR) which invigorated debate around this issue. A key theme in the report, and one that continues to be discussed (see for example DFID, 2010), is the difficulty in defining education quality. The 2005 GMR emphasised that quality must be seen in the light of how societies define and understand the purpose of education, yet education quality is largely assessed through pupils' test scores which, in Sub-Saharan Africa, are decreasing year on year (UNESCO, 2009).

Such evidence reflects badly on teachers at both policy and local levels and compounds the low status attributed to teachers: the media regularly lay the blame for poor education quality at their feet. The majority of newspaper reports documenting teacher strikes in South Africa and Nigeria in 2010, for example, did not express support for the teachers' demands. In 2012 there have been reports in Kenya and Ghana of teachers being beaten up and chased from their schools by pupils and parents angered by low exam scores (Amadala & Yonga, 2012; Bessey, 2012).

The following sub-sections highlight aspects of teachers' work and lives that receive particular attention across the literature. It is important to acknowledge how related these aspects are and that it could be concluded that there is a vicious circle of processes. Much

is written, for example, about low motivation and morale yet these are considered to be both causes and consequences of the reportedly declining teacher status across the continent, which is both a cause and a consequence of poor remuneration and salary delays. Poor remuneration and salary delays are also a result of weak educational governance and administrative mismanagement. Poor remuneration and mismanagement can discourage the interest of the most able students and the profession is increasingly considered a last resort career. Poor management can undermine teacher motivation and provide a fertile environment for professional misconduct, absenteeism and corruption. Professional misconduct, absenteeism and corruption can feed back into the cycle of declining status at the national and community level.

#### *Teacher motivation and morale*

There is a great deal of evidence to suggest that teacher motivation in Sub-Saharan Africa is low and in decline (UNESCO, 2009; VSO, 2002; 2009). Low motivation has been reported among student teachers before they even enter the profession (Akyeampong and Stephens, 2000). Half of teachers surveyed in Zambia ranked their motivation at 'low' or 'medium' (Verhagen and Tweedie, 2001). A study in Mozambique reported that 44% of teachers claimed to be de-motivated and 13% dissatisfied with teaching (VSO, 2009). Over a third of teachers in a study of six African countries ranked themselves as 'poorly' or 'very poorly' motivated (Bennell and Akyeampong, 2007). VSO argue that 'teachers' motivation is at best fragile and at worst severely deteriorating' and that teachers exist in a 'climate of frustration... and despondency' (VSO, 2002:24).

Bennell (2004) claims that there is little empirical evidence about the impact low motivation and morale have on the quality of teaching. However, low teacher motivation has been linked with teacher absenteeism (Chaudhury et al, 2006; Kassiem, 2007; Phamotse et al,

2005), high teacher turnover (Akyeampong and Stephens, 2002; Verhagen and Tweedie, 2001; VSO, 2008) and professional misconduct (Sumra, 2004; TI, 2005; 2009; Welmond, 2002).

The relationship between low motivation, teacher absence and teacher attrition, however, appears to be complex. Teacher absenteeism is reported to be high across the continent – a study in Uganda, for example, found that a quarter of teachers surveyed had been absent for two days in the previous week (New Vision, 2010) – but absenteeism is sometimes beyond the teachers' control. In rural Lesotho, for example, teachers are absent for up to three days each month because they must travel to the nearest town to collect their salaries (Phamotse et al, 2005). Sumra found the same to be true for rural teachers in Tanzania (2004). Teachers with health problems in rural areas may have to travel for several hours or days to reach a medical facility. However, actual teacher-attrition rates are comparatively low in most African countries - around 8-10% per year (Bennell, 2004)<sup>8</sup>. It appears that lateral transfers (usually from rural to urban areas) which compound the issue of teacher deployment are more problematic, as is what VSO (2002:13) terms 'virtual attrition': teachers remaining in their post but barely teaching.

### *The school environment*

Many primary schools in Sub-Saharan Africa are reported to be flimsily built and in need of repair (Mukichi, 2008). They often lack pipe-borne water and electricity and have poor natural lighting (Bennell, 2004; DFID, 2008, Taylor and Mulhall, 2001). School toilets are reported as being non-existent or unhygienic (Buckler, 2009b; LaFraniere, 2005; Mitchell, 2003), vandalised (Odeke, 2006) or perilously unstable (Mnisi et al, 2008). There may not

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<sup>8</sup> The Washington Post, for example, reported that up to half of American teachers leave the profession in the first five years (Lambert, 2006).

be enough desks or chairs for the pupils (Lujara et al, 2007) or even the teachers (VSO, 2007). Staffrooms are increasingly used as additional classrooms (Bennell, 2004). A shortage of textbooks is a widely cited problem. The Ethiopian government, for example, has a policy that the textbook to pupil ratio should be 1:1. Not one school in a VSO-Ethiopia study, however, had enough textbooks and many teachers were using their own money to buy materials (VSO, 2009). In Uganda, Womakuyu (2010) reports from a region where teachers have one text book for 100 pupils.

Accommodation for teachers is reported to be an issue, particularly in rural areas. Bennell and Akyeampong (2007:ix) describe it as a 'major headache' for teachers. In some countries teacher housing is the responsibility of the Ministry of Education or local education authorities. The Ugandan Education Ministry, for example, allocates 15% of its Schools Facilities Grants to the construction of teacher housing (Mulkeen, 2006). In Ghana, the percentage of teachers housed through government funds rose from 5% in 1988 to 30% in 2003 (Bennell, 2004). Where there is no official policy, communities and NGOs may raise the money required (Eagle, 2006; Mulkeen, 2006). More frequently teachers are forced to live in cramped or inadequate conditions near the school, or live outside the community and travel to and from the school each day (Barrett, 2006; Howard, 1993; NMF, 2005). A Ugandan study found housing to be the key determinant of teacher retention in rural areas (Mulkeen, 2006).

#### *Educational governance and teacher management*

The management of teachers in Africa has been reported as weak, chaotic and 'lacking clear rules' which can 'generate conflict, power vacuum and overlap and duplication of effort' (IIEP, 1999 in Bennell, 2004:10). Management styles are perceived by teachers to be authoritarian and channels for teacher grievances are reportedly convoluted (Oplatka,

2007). Teacher strikes are regularly reported (IRIN, 2008; 2010; Shosanya, 2008; Wines, 2007).

Since the mid-1980s many African countries have transferred education management to sub-national levels (Brosio, 2000; Moon, 2008). Decentralisation – a key feature of social sector structural adjustment reforms and a common feature of educational governance reform within the EFA agenda – aims to improve recruitment and deployment patterns through greater accountability of education officials to teachers and communities (UNESCO, 2007a; 2009). Decentralisation of educational governance has had mixed effects and ‘few systematic reviews have been conducted on the processes and consequences’ in low income countries (UNESCO, 2007a:8). A common view is that the idea has merit but in many countries it has become an insufficiently funded ‘downloading exercise’ with ‘disastrous’ results (SAPRIN, 2002:155). Studies from Zambia and Malawi report a continued lack of transparency and accountability in decentralised education systems - teachers in these countries perceive the increased contact with education officials as ‘checking up’ rather than supportive and most major problems, for example late payment of salaries, are blamed on regional rather than district offices (VSO, 2002). In Nigeria it is reported that the shifting responsibility for salaries between federal and local government has created confusion and back-logs (Adelabu, 2005).

Poor communication between education officials and teachers appears to be a key issue, particularly for rural teachers (Jessop and Penny, 1998). Teachers across the whole of VSO’s Valuing Teachers research series claimed that they rarely received circulars or bulletins from the district offices (VSO, 2002; 2008; 2009). In Tanzania, rural teachers learnt more about the Primary Education Development Programme through the media than through official channels (Sumra, 2004). A South African study found that only 19% of



policy documents and guides leaving the South African Education Department reached teachers and school governing bodies (Palmer Development Group, 1999).

Another important educational governance issue is teacher deployment. Studies have shown that while in some cases decentralisation has improved the regulation of teacher supply it remains weak and is considered a major policy challenge across the continent (Botwinski, 2009; Mulkeen, 2006). The challenge of even teacher supply is compounded by a lack of accurate databases; in 2010 Nigeria's Imo state reported nearly 200 'ghost teachers' on the payroll (Daily Champion, 2010). In countries where teachers have little choice over their posting, problems are reported when teachers do not accept the post and drop out of the profession. This is said to be especially true of rural postings (Hedges, 2000). Governments are employing a range of initiatives (from incentives to punitive) to ensure teachers take up their posts (Kaunde, 2008; Mpokosa and Ndaruhutse, 2009).

The recruitment of untrained, unqualified teachers combined with raising minimum qualifications for teaching means that, in addition to pre-service teacher education, governments in Sub-Saharan Africa are training and qualifying hundreds of thousands of teachers already working in the profession. Nigeria, for example, raised the percentage of teachers with a National Certificate of Education (NCE) from 35.7% in 1996 to 91.6% in 2004 (Moon, 2008). Many unqualified teachers await training though. In 2006 UNESCO estimated that more than half of primary school teachers in the Democratic Republic of the Congo were 'volunteer parents' with no formal training (Williams, 2006:1). In 2006 only 35% of primary school teachers in Chad and 49% in Sierra Leone had received formal training (UIS, 2010).

UNESCO data also suggests that in some countries the demand for teachers still exceeds training capacity: the percentage of trained teachers in Togo, for example, dropped from 21% in 2000 to 15% in 2007 (UIS, 2010). Quality of teacher education is also a concern (UNESCO, 2007b). The VSO Valuing Teachers series reported that teachers across all 13 focus countries felt that their initial teacher training had been insufficient (VSO, 2002; 2009).

The issue of teacher education and qualification is complex. Teachers may have several years' teaching experience yet still register as untrained or unqualified in databases. In addition, accurate and up to date data around teacher education and qualification is extremely hard to capture. Furthermore, language around teacher training and qualification is often used interchangeably and raising or lowering minimum requirements compounds statistics and discussions about teacher qualification<sup>9</sup>. A further layer of complexity arises because it is often cheaper for governments to hire unqualified teachers. In Uganda, for example, Lewin (2002) reports a bottle-neck of qualified teachers unable to find work even though there is a teacher shortage in schools and a significant number of employed teachers do not hold the minimum qualification.

It is widely reported that teachers – fully qualified or not - earn less than other civil servants, that their salaries are declining in real terms and often do not constitute a living wage (Barrett, 2005b; Oplatka, 2007; Sumra, 2004; UNESCO, 2009). Bennell (2004) estimated that the average African primary school teacher earns less than \$3 a day. A related problem appears to be the late-payment of salaries, particularly for teachers in

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<sup>9</sup> In order to improve education quality some governments (for example in Ghana and Sudan) have raised the minimum qualification for teachers, effectively rendering a large proportion of previously qualified teachers unqualified. In other countries (for example Rwanda) governments have lowered the minimum qualification for teachers. This has the multiple effects of facilitating recruitment, reducing training costs and boosting ranking on international databases (Perraton, 2010).

rural areas (Moulton, 2001; Mulkeen, 2006; Sumra, 2004) and supplementary incentives are rarely considered adequate by teachers (Mulkeen, 2006; VSO, 2008). Incentive schemes and salary administration are also reportedly subject to mismanagement and misappropriation (Adelabu, 2005; Osei, 2006; Welmond, 2002). In many Sub-Saharan African countries teacher pay and incentives are unlikely to increase significantly: low funds and caps on government wage bills mean that up to 90% of education budgets are spent on teacher salaries (Actionaid, 2007; UNESCO, 2009). In addition, \$4.6 billion were cut from Sub-Saharan African education budgets between 2009 and 2010 (UNESCO, 2010)<sup>10</sup>.

It is widely reported that many teachers in low-income countries have alternative sources of income. In Sierra Leone teachers can opt to supplement their income by teaching in official after-school extension classes and in Rwanda the Ministry of Education has set up a loan-scheme for teachers to invest in a range of income-producing activities (Gahene, 2008). Most initiatives, however, tend to be informal and frowned upon by the authorities (Agesiba, 2012). Teachers reportedly offer unofficial private tuition and create syllabus pamphlets for pupils to buy (Adelabu, 2005; Barrett, 2005b), sell food at school (Norley, 2009) or trade at local markets (Casely-Hayford, 2007). In rural areas teachers' supplementary income is likely to come from farming (Casely-Hayford, 2007; Howard, 1993).

While teachers' salaries have suffered relative to other occupations, their workload has reportedly expanded (Bennell, 2004; VSO, 2002). Pupil enrolments have increased faster than teacher recruitment leading to high pupil-teacher ratios (PTRs). UNESCO's recommended PTR for primary schools in low-income countries is 40:1. Globally 27

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<sup>10</sup> Equivalent to a 10% reduction in spending per primary school pupil (UNESCO, 2010).

countries exceed this ratio, 22 of these countries are in Sub-Saharan Africa (UNESCO, 2009). While some reports highlight excessively high PTRs<sup>11</sup>, they vary considerably across countries, regions and age-ranges. Real PTR figures are sometimes hidden behind double or triple shift systems; over a third of Rwandan teachers teach two shifts per day (Bennell, 2004). Some studies have suggested that teachers in rural schools work longer hours than urban teachers (Bennell and Akyeampong, 2007) and suffer higher levels of work-related stress (Duyilemi, 1992). Others suggest that high enrolments combined with increased levels of bureaucracy, paperwork and curriculum diversification mean heavy workloads are shared by teachers across geographical locations (UNESCO, 2009; VSO, 2008).

### *Corruption and malpractice*

Transparency International (TI) has published a series of reports documenting corruption in African education systems (TI, 2005; 2006; 2009). In these reports teachers are shown to be both victims and perpetrators of corrupt practices. TI claim that the most common forms of corruption within education systems are illegal demands for non-existent funds, the embezzlement of resources and the abuse of power by teachers. The TI findings are backed up by smaller studies: Sumra (2004) found that Tanzanian teachers suspect their salaries are being misappropriated. Welmond (2002) describes how it is common practice for teachers in Benin to befriend and publicly support politicians in exchange for promotion, relocation and additional money. Teachers are also reported to illegally charge pupils fees for registration (Mugari, 2010) or withhold content from their non-fee-paying students (Bennell, 2004; Tao, 2009). Some male teachers are accused of sexually abusing female students in return for money and higher grades (Antonowicz, 2010).

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<sup>11</sup> DFID describes a region of Mozambique with a PTR of over 250:1 (DFID, 2008).

TI suggests that corruption in education systems is more detrimental than in other sectors. However, their research shows that stakeholders for education consider it to be less serious because it is often only visible at the beginning and the end of the school year and because it tends to involve small amounts of money: 'the fact that the corrupt individuals in education are not wealthy encourages a perception that small amounts paid in bribes are somehow excusable' (TI, 2005:66).

### ***2.2.2 Teaching in rural areas in Sub-Saharan Africa***

This section explains this study's focus on teachers in rural schools by showing how the issues outlined above reportedly affect and are experienced by rural teachers.

Most studies that focus on rural teaching environments do not define how rural locations are determined; 'rural' appears to be used to represent any countryside location or agricultural settlement, a 'catch word denoting everything that is not urban or metropolitan' (Monk, 2007:156)<sup>12</sup>. What is clear from the literature though is that (however the terminology is understood) rural areas present exacerbated and additional challenges rendering rural schools undesirable for teachers. Most studies conclude that teachers do not want to teach in rural schools. Six hundred posts in rural primary schools in Zambia were not taken up in the 2007-2008 academic year (Zambian Economist, 2008). Hedges (2002) reports a similar situation in Ghana.

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<sup>12</sup> Measures for determining 'rural' exist across disciplines and regions. A common measurement is population but thresholds are inconsistent: a Zambian settlement with 2000 inhabitants is classified as rural, for example, while the same size settlement would be classified as urban in Ethiopia (Wako, 2005). Similar discrepancies can be found across education literature from America: there is no uniform definition of what population number determines rural (see for example Lyson, 2002 and Kleinfeld and McDiarmid, 1986). Another criterion for determining rurality is the distance between a settlement and a paved road (see for example Alcazar et al, 2006 and Kremer et al, 2004). Rurality is also defined by geophysical characteristics such as deserts, mountains, water, vast distances, difficult climate and hostile terrains (South African Government Gazette, 2008).

The challenges are due mainly to a combination of schools' distance from urban centres and limited availability or function of telecommunications and transport services. Late-payment of rural teachers' salaries is often due to delays in transferring money from banks to regional or local education centres. Alternatively teachers may have to travel for several hours or even days to a bank to collect their salary which can increase teacher absenteeism (Moulton, 2001; Mulkeen, 2006; Sumra, 2004). Similarly it is reported that rural schools have less contact with education offices which reportedly enhances feelings of isolation and also encourages malpractice or absenteeism as there are fewer checks on teacher behaviour and attendance (Sumra, 2004). Another reported implication of rurality is that teachers feel it limits their opportunities for access to training and professional development (Barrett, 2005a; Hedges, 2002; Moulton, 2001; Phamotse et al, 2005). A study from Eritrea describes how in-service programmes for rural teachers are often cancelled due to transport difficulties and costs (Belay et al, 2007).

Attitudes towards education in rural areas are another reported problem. Rural children are considered more difficult to educate especially if their parents did not attend school and attach a low value to schooling (Mulkeen, 2005). In relation to this, curricula is reported to lack relevance to the lives of rural pupils which makes school less appealing and provides additional reasons for parents not to insist their children attend (Hedges, 2002). Rural children are also more likely to be needed to help their families at busy times in the agricultural calendar. Another challenge arises when teachers are posted to areas where they do not speak the first language of the pupils. This not only makes teaching more challenging but also may limit communication between the teacher and the community (Mulkeen, 2005).

Rural homes are less likely to have electricity which makes studying in the evening difficult and pupils may not be able to complete their homework (this may also affect teachers who are studying in their spare time). A lack of electricity provides additional challenges in the classroom too as it may be impossible to provide heat, light or ventilation. The lack of a water supply in many rural areas makes hygiene in schools a major problem and combined with poor toilet facilities – also more common in rural areas – ensures that girls (and female teachers) are less likely to come to school when they are menstruating (Buckler, 2009b). Teachers may perceive that rural living increases their risk of disease (Akyeampong and Stephens, 2002), and there may not be adequate healthcare services nearby (Towse et al, 2002). Limited water supplies can be a challenge for teachers, particularly if they grew up or studied in an urban centre (Mulkeen, 2005; Taylor and Mulhall, 2001).

Mulkeen (2005) suggests that much of the literature around education systems in Sub-Saharan Africa fails to distinguish between rural and urban education systems. He terms this the 'hidden problem'. While this literature review has revealed quite extensive availability of information about rural education it is possible to identify key examples of where his assessment is valid. UNESCO's ISCED<sup>13</sup> questionnaires, for example, distinguish between public and private education systems, but not between rural and urban areas. This lack of distinction can be misleading. In 2005 the UNESCO statistics database reports the overall percentage of trained teachers in Lesotho as being 64% (UIS, 2010). A study conducted by Lesotho's Chief Education Officer found that 24% of teachers in the lowlands were unqualified but the percentage of untrained teachers in the rural mountainous regions was over 51%. More specifically, in several schools less than one

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<sup>13</sup> The ISCED (International Standard Classification of Education) framework compiles education data. Questionnaires are distributed to over 200 countries twice-yearly and the data is used to maintain UNESCO's education statistics database (UNESCO, 1997).

third of the teachers had the minimum required qualification, and in some rural schools none of the teachers held this qualification (Phamotse et al, 2005). The UIS database recorded the percentage of trained teachers in Mozambique as 65% in 2006 (UIS, 2010). Case-studies of schools in the same year found that 92% of teachers in the capital (Maputo) were trained, compared to 42% of teachers in the rural area of Manica (Mulkeen, 2006).

Another area in which there is often little distinction between rural and urban teachers is the more in-depth and analytical literature into teachers' lives; in their study of teacher identity in South Africa and the Gambia, Jessop and Penny (1998) make no attempt to link any of the participant teachers' voices to a rural or urban location<sup>14</sup>, nor do Welmond (2002) or Akyeampong and Stephens (2000) in their studies of teachers and teacher identity in Benin and Ghana, Tao (2009) in her exploration of teacher capabilities in Tanzania, or Onderi and Croll (2009) in their study of teacher effectiveness in Kenya.

Where the literature – both empirical and analytical – does distinguish between rural and urban areas there is a tendency to assume that rural is synonymous with disadvantage and negative experiences. Descriptions of the factors that distinguish rural school environments from urban ones present rural teaching as a punishment for teachers. This perception is also evident at policy level: in Malawi and Zambia forced deployment to rural and remote schools is used to discipline teachers found guilty of malpractice (VSO, 2006). The Zambian Education Ministry is reportedly converting the essentially symbolic Teacher

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<sup>14</sup> While the South African teachers in their study are based in rural areas, the Gambian teachers are from a range of locations which are not specified in the authors' conceptualisation of teacher identity.



Service Form<sup>15</sup> into a legally binding document forcing teachers to accept – and remain in – rural posts (Kaunde, 2008).

It is clear from this literature review that many aspects of teaching and living in rural areas are more challenging than in urban areas (Leach, 2005; NMF, 2005; Mukichi, 2008) and this (or at least the perception of this) is verified by reports of teachers failing to turn up to rural postings. However, there is an absence of studies that explore why rural areas might be the preferred location for some teachers, or even acknowledge that this might be the case. Just as Monk (2007) claims that rural is the catchword for everything not urban or metropolitan, rural school appears to be the catchword for a negative professional experience for teachers.

A small number of reports do highlight altruistic feelings among some rural teachers: 'I sat down, looked around and realised that I needed to develop my community by encouraging the younger generation' (NMF, 2005:12, see also Casely-Hayford, 2007; Hedges, 2000). The Tanzanian teachers Barrett categorises as 'vocation teachers' found rural environments bearable because they 'considered themselves fortunate to be teachers' (Barrett, 2008:502). Hedges (2002) also found that some newly qualified teachers in rural Ghana appreciated the opportunity to own land. Most of the literature though tends to present a uniformly negative view of rural teaching environments in Sub-Saharan Africa – particularly in professional terms - the emphasis is on endurance rather than enjoyment.

What does appear to be 'hidden', therefore, is an in-depth understanding of how teachers experience rural schools and how they understand their role. This study hypothesises that

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<sup>15</sup> A document newly qualified teachers sign to prove their national devotion, stating that they are willing to work where their services are required.

teachers in rural schools are in an interesting position professionally because any conflict between their dual role as representatives of the official education ideologies of the national or regional government and the ideals of the communities they teach is likely to be more pronounced.

The literature suggests that rural communities may value education differently to urban communities but does not explain how this affects teachers' role or perception of their role. On one hand (largely stemming from the MDG discourse) there is an implication is that it is the teacher's role to convince communities of the relevance of the curriculum to ensure parents send their children to school. There is little consideration that rural teachers might empathise with or even share communities' values; they are portrayed as actors of the national government. On the other hand, the more recent literature around education framed by social justice perspectives asserts that education quality must be seen in the light of how different societies define and understand the purpose of education (Tikly and Barrett, 2011; UNESCO, 2005); this implies that teachers are actors of the community. If the values of rural communities are different to the values of the government, this introduces a competing discourse for teachers to interpret and teach to. It seems important – in the pursuit of a clearer understanding of education quality - that a better understanding of how rural teachers navigate between these potentially different values around the purpose and processes of education is reached.

Also hidden (or missing) is the implication or evidence to suggest that teaching in a rural school might provide a positive professional experience for teachers. The majority of the existing literature re-enforces the negative aspects of rural teaching with a view to (although this is not always made explicit) highlighting possible solutions to make rural teaching environments more appealing, therefore attracting potential teachers to the

profession. Existing policies tend to also work within a 'redistributive' and resource-focussed agenda that aims to make rural schools more like urban schools (Cuervo, 2012:83).

Many recommendations, for example, focus on paying teachers higher salaries which, though important, is doubly problematic. First, as was suggested in section 2.2.1, there is not enough money in education budgets to significantly increase teachers' wages or incentives<sup>16</sup>. Secondly, studies of teacher motivation and morale have found that similar proportions of teachers across countries with different salary structures are de-motivated (Bennell, 2004); it is too simplistic to assume that money is all that matters to teachers<sup>17</sup>. Few studies approach the issue of understanding teachers' contexts and experiences from the direction of aiming to capture and explore positive professional experiences for teachers in rural schools with a view to building policy around these positive experiences. This negative focus also suggests that teachers' experiences of the profession are determined by factors beyond their control. It fails to acknowledge the agency teachers have or draw on to direct the work they do, manage or improve their working conditions or boost their motivation. A key focus of this thesis is to better understand teacher agency in these terms.

The evidence presented in this section suggests that an in-depth focus on the professional lives of teachers in rural areas is important. This study intends to go beyond simply restating the challenges outlined above and instead explore how teachers perceive, work with and respond to these challenges – with a specific focus on how they understand their

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<sup>16</sup> In some countries it is up to the parents to provide additional incentives. A Zimbabwean newspaper editorial reports that up to 30% of teachers' salaries come from community donations (Herald, 2012).

<sup>17</sup> Richard Layard's book *Happiness: Lessons from a new science* (2006), for example, shows that as societies get richer they do not necessarily become happier.

role as teachers. If governments are to attract teachers to rural schools a better understanding about how teachers experience these environments as professionals is required.

### ***2.2.3 Female teachers in Sub-Saharan Africa***

Just as the experiences of rural teachers tend to be hidden within broad samples of teachers from different geographical environments, the experiences of women teachers in Africa tend to be hidden within a literature that is largely gender neutral. This is evident across the empirical and analytical literature. The extensive VSO teacher motivation series, for example, does not critically address issues related to teachers' gender. A VSO report, *Listening to Teachers: The Motivation and Morale of Education Workers in Mozambique* (2008), lists gender as a 'cross-cutting issue' yet the chapter devoted to this focuses almost solely on female pupils; just one paragraph in the 80 page report is devoted to gender specific experiences of teachers. Another VSO report, *What makes teachers tick?* (2002), devotes a small section to female teachers but this focuses on the harassment, violence and discrimination they face. In *Teachers for Rural Schools* Mulkeen (2005) summarises the literature on gender and teacher deployment but speculates on why women might not want to teach in rural areas rather than discussing their actual experiences of being there. Nor are any of the conclusions or recommendations at the end of Mulkeen's report gender-specific. In their studies of teacher identity neither Jessop and Penny (1998) or Welmond (2002) disaggregate their data by gender or consider the effect of being male or female on the models of identity they construct. Nor does Tao (2008) acknowledge gender in her study of teacher capabilities and behaviour in Tanzania. Howard's (1993) ethnographic study of rural teaching in Sudan focuses on male teachers.

No reference is made to their female colleagues nor is there a justification for excluding them from the research.

This is important because, in the context of attempts to increase both pupil enrolment and teacher recruitment, it is widely acknowledged that schools with female teachers are more likely to attract and retain female pupils (Casely-Hayford, 2007; Maazou, 2009; Mutume, 2005; UNESCO, 2001). The proportion of women teachers has increased across the continent over the last twenty years<sup>18</sup> but there are geographical disparities: in Anglophone central and West African countries for example, female teachers are in the minority (Maazou, 2009; UNESCO, 2008).

Disparities exist at national levels too. Female teachers tend to be concentrated in urban centres: Mulkeen (2005) reports women make up 82% of teachers in urban schools in Malawi but only 31% in rural areas. These disparities are reported to exist for a range of reasons. It is often less acceptable for women to live away from the family home and long journeys to school may be more difficult if a woman also has a family to look after (UN-HABITAT, 2009). In some cultures it may be unacceptable for women to make these long journeys alone, or the journey (as well as living alone in a rural village) may put them at risk of physical or sexual abuse (OCHA/IRIN, 2005). Hedges (2002) reports that young women teachers in Ghana prefer teaching in urban centres because they believe that a rural posting will limit their opportunities for marriage.

Several initiatives exist to boost recruitment of female teachers (see Safford et al, 2012; UNESCO, 2011; UN-HABITAT, 2009). However, Kirk (2004; 2006) suggests that it is

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<sup>18</sup> UNESCO estimates that there were 2,834,696 primary school teachers in Sub-Saharan Africa in 2008. Of these, 1,226,319, or 43%, were female (UIS, 2010).

misguided to assume that women teachers are instinctively aware of gender equality concepts and are often subject to the same gender assumptions, discrimination, sexual harassment and abuse that girls face in school' (Kirk, 2006:3, see also Halai, 2011). This assertion is backed up by VSO (2002) and Dreyer et al (2002) who report incidences of male teachers and education officials sexually harassing female teachers in Malawi and Zambia. Bhana et al (2009) challenge the assumption that male teachers in South Africa will automatically adopt gender sensitive discourses in education policy, arguing that male teachers 'do not operate in a social or geographical vacuum' (p.58) and are often responsible for 'shaping and reproducing gender inequalities' (p.59). UNESCO (2007a) suggests that educational governance, at national and local levels, tends to be dominated by elite male employees who may struggle to accept and enact gender-sensitive policies and who may fail to understand or represent the interests of local girls and women.

Kirk's ethnographies of teachers in Pakistan (2004; 2006) reveal that men and women experience teaching differently and have different demands on their time, a finding echoed by Osler (1997) in her study of Kenyan teacher educators and Hutchison (2009) who focuses on student teachers in Ghana. These authors argue, as does this study, that more research into gendered aspects of teaching including how male and female teachers understand and experience the teaching profession is necessary.

#### ***2.2.4 Summary of section 2.2***

The well-established shortage of teachers in Sub-Saharan Africa, particularly in rural areas and especially female teachers in rural areas has influenced the focus of this study, as has the impression given by much of the literature that many existing teachers are too deskilled, too de-motivated and too distracted to teach. There is a conflict in the literature

which suggests that on the one hand teachers are not adequately fulfilling their professional duties and are failing their pupils but on the other hand teachers (and especially those in rural areas) have limited contact with education officials and therefore limited awareness of these professional duties. The literature also suggests that even those who are motivated to teach are faced with extremely challenging working environments – both physically and administratively. These representations of teaching are at odds with initiatives to recruit and retain teachers in rural areas; there is little leverage with which to attract good quality candidates.

These gaps and conflicts in the literature inspired the first two research questions:

- i. How are teachers' roles officially understood in Sub-Saharan Africa and what do governments value in teachers' work?
- ii. How do female teachers in rural Sub-Saharan African primary schools understand their role and what do they value in their work?

In response to these questions this study explores the official expectations of teachers in the five focus countries (Ghana, Nigeria, Kenya, South Africa and Sudan) and compares them to the perspectives of female teachers working in rural schools. It is interested in how the teachers understand their role and how this understanding is influenced by their interpretations of official guidelines for teaching and their experiences of being women living and working in rural environments.

## **2.3 Understanding teachers' professional lives**

A key tenet of the recent attention given to education quality is a focus on what and how children learn when they are in school. This has necessitated a focus on 'the dynamics of teaching and learning' and there is an increasing body of evidence to suggest what makes teachers effective (UNESCO, 2005:24). This, in turn, has led to studies that aim to better understand how teachers work and how they respond to shifts and developments in policy and their environment<sup>19</sup>. These studies were examined to see how useful their approaches might be in answering the first two research questions.

### ***2.3.1 Teacher identity***

This section explores identity – a prominent approach in exploring teachers' work in Sub-Saharan Africa which was of particular interest in the early stages of this study.

Conceptualising Sub-Saharan African teachers' identity follows a more established trend of studying teacher identity in high-income countries; over the last four decades identity has increasingly been used to better understand teachers' lives and work. Contemporary thinking draws on definitions of identity from Social Science, Psychology and Philosophy which are rooted in social constructionism, and identity is seen to be fluid and constantly evolving (Barrett, 2008; Beijaard et al, 2004; Hall and du Gay, 1996). Such theorising has replaced earlier notions of identity that regarded it as a stable core (see for example Cooley, 1902).

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<sup>19</sup> Much of the empirical work on teachers' lives in Sub-Saharan Africa is conducted by non-academic organisations. In these, theoretical frameworks are not explicitly acknowledged and research approaches are couched in the broader aims of the organisation. VSO, for example, claims that its multi-country study of teacher motivation is grounded in the principles of advocacy and participation that underpin the ethos of VSO (VSO, 2002).



It is now most commonly understood that identity is interpreted and reinterpreted as one lives through experiences (Kerby, 1991). It is no longer considered something that one has, but something that is constantly developing: Beijaard et al (2000:750) define identity as 'the various meanings people attach to themselves or the meanings attributed by others'. In education studies identity has been used to answer questions around how teachers see themselves and their lives. Teacher identity research from high-income countries has shown how the 'broader social conditions in which teachers live and work, and the personal and professional elements of teachers' lives, experiences, beliefs and practices are integral to one another' (Day et al, 2006:601) and that teacher identity is inseparable from personal, local and political contexts (Goodson and Numan, 2002; MacLure, 1993; Nias, 1989; Day et al, 2006). Others have shown how identity is an important factor in teacher motivation, commitment and job-satisfaction (Beijaard, 1995).

Studies of identity are increasingly used to make sense of African teachers' work and lives. A key aim of these studies (which is also a key aim of this study) is to show how national and international education discourse and policy is enacted at classroom level. Jessop and Penny (1998), for example, provide insights into how South African and Gambian teachers' pedagogical approach stems from their professional and personal identities. Barrett (2008) reveals how Tanzanian experiences of teaching result from the interaction of identity, experience and location. Smit and Fritz (2008) consider identity within a symbolic interactionist framework to explore how national policies impact on South African teachers. Barrett (2005a) and Welmond (2002) examine how international education policies impact on teachers' identities in Tanzania and Benin. Akyeampong and Stephens (2000) show how Ghanaian student teachers' expectations of their career draw on their identities as former pupils.

Despite the large number of studies devoted to researching teacher identity some still consider it to be a poorly defined concept that is surrounded by confusion and vagueness (Beijaard et al, 2000; Korthagen, 2004). It has limited transferability between contexts, not least because identity is culturally (as well as nationally, locally, gender and age) specific but also because, as a concept, it has no common theoretical framing and draws on diverse and sometimes ambiguous definitions.

In the teacher identity literature, for example, there appears to be little agreement on the distinction between teacher identity, teacher role identity and teacher professional identity. Further distinctions include teacher socialisation (see Knowles, 1992; Zeichner and Hoefft, 1996), teacher narrative (Jessop and Penny, 1998; 1999) and teacher biography (see Kelchtermans, 1993) all of which are used to better understand teachers personal and professional selves and are frequently cross-referenced in the teacher identity literature. A survey of studies on teacher professional identity published between 1988 and 2000 found that two thirds did not provide an explicit definition of professional identity (Beijaard et al, 2004)<sup>20</sup>.

A key criticism of identity studies is that they risk essentialising teacher identities (Barrett, 2005a; 2006). Barrett suggests that teachers in England and North America are characterised as individualist, French teachers as academically orientated and Sub-Saharan African teachers as didactic. Indeed, Welmond's (2002) study of teacher identity in Benin describes teachers as a single cohort: a 'historical, political and social actor' (p.37). Jessop and Penny (1998) identify just two categories of teachers in South Africa and the Gambia: humanist and relational. In her study of teachers' identity in Tanzania

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<sup>20</sup> Although unacknowledged by the authors, terminological ambiguity also weakened the survey's rigour. A library search engine was used to find articles on 'teacher professional identity'. Studies with aims and methods aligned with the survey, but a different definition of identity may not have been located.

Barrett (2008) aims to avoid this criticism by suggesting a broad range of categories with which the teachers in her study identify. She arranges her categories as a Venn diagram to show how a teacher's identity can encompass multiple categories.

The acknowledgement of multiple identities as well as movement between different identity types points to the central tension of using identity to understand teachers' lives. That is, studies that aim to understand teachers' identities are trying to capture something that is widely acknowledged as being fluid. This does not prevent studies of teacher identity from providing useful information about how teachers see themselves and their work, but it does limit their usefulness beyond this categorisation. Welmond's study, for example, aims to respond to the international policy discourse. He suggests that a consideration of teacher identity can provide a lens through which to view and understand the impacts of global trends on national education systems and 'possibly inform better 'fitting' policy' (p.37). Barrett (2008) claims that she will show how her conceptualisation of teacher identity can be useful in the implementation of innovative educational policies. Neither, however, provides clear direction as to how this might be possible. Welmond concludes that teachers should be 'engaged as allies in education transformation' (2002:65); a valid but vague point, not directly related to teacher identity. Barrett's conclusion is similar: '... it should also be possible to introduce innovation with a sense of deference that simultaneously respects how teachers construct their identity now and has an expectation of what can be realised in the future' (p.506). It appears that the explanatory power of identity, the 'so what', is limited.

A further drawback of identity studies, in relation to the research questions of this thesis, lies in its limited ability to explain how teachers are able to convert their feelings, beliefs and understandings about teaching into practice. Teacher identity has been used

extensively to better understand how teachers perceive their roles in classrooms and schools, how they see themselves and their work and how this is influenced by the local context. However, identity alone is unable to show how teachers' perceptions of their roles relate to, interact with or conflict with their abilities to action these roles. While studies of teacher identity can reveal what teachers value and why, they struggle to reveal how teachers are able to pursue the things that they value.

Jessop and Penny (1998) reveal, for example, that the teachers in their study who were characterised as 'relational teachers' placed a high value on 'being an example in all aspects, in teaching as well as studying' (p.398). However, their study does not show the extent to which the relational teachers were able to, or how they attempted to, achieve this. Akyeampong and Stephens (2000) show that student teachers in Ghana have notions of themselves as equipped to effectively impart knowledge to their pupils, yet there is no suggestion as to how effective these student teachers actually are in their classrooms. Welmond (2002) argues that 'fundamentally teacher identity in different societies determines how teachers' successes or effectiveness will be judged' (p.45), but teacher identity only shows us what teachers imagine themselves to be (or what others imagine) rather than what they actually are and are able to do. In this study, therefore, which aims to better understand how teachers both perceive themselves as teachers as well as the extent to which they are able to be the teacher they imagine themselves to be, an identity focus would only contribute to the first half of this aim. Another perspective is needed to answer the third research question:

- iii. To what extent are female teachers in rural schools able to pursue and achieve valued aspects of teaching?

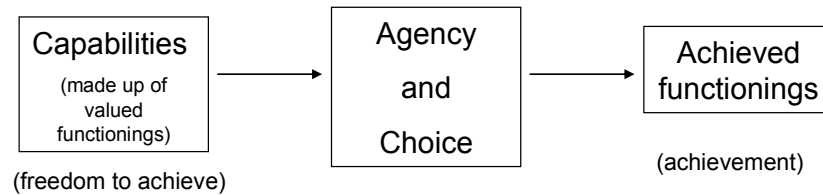
### **2.3.2 The capability approach**

This study draws on the capability approach to provide this additional perspective because of its focus on the freedom people have to pursue and achieve the things that they value. The approach was first proposed in the 1980s by the economist and philosopher Amartya Sen. It synthesised some aspects of the then loosely defined, Aristotelian inspired human development approach<sup>21</sup> and was posited as a liberal alternative to other (predominantly utilitarian) development discourses of the time.

In his book *Inequality Reexamined*, Sen famously challenged the inherent notion of equality as the goal of development by asking ‘equality of what?’ (Sen, 1992). Here he critiqued the resolute pursuit of equality across development discourse and development endeavours and the implicit understanding of human differences and diversity as a ‘secondary complication’ (p.xi). He argued that the ‘powerful rhetoric of the ‘equality of man’ tends to ‘deflect attention from these differences’ (p.1). Instead, the capability approach highlights the difference between means and ends and considers the processes that convert means *into* ends (Sen, 2009). It focuses not on equality in terms of resources – which Sen calls ‘detached objects of convenience’ (2009:233) – but equality in terms of the freedom people have to utilise resources to live the life they want to live and be the person they want to be. Therefore, instead of people being equal in terms of what they have, they should be ‘equal with respect to effective freedom’ to pursue valued ‘beings and doings’ (Cohen, 1993:7). Sen calls this freedom ‘capability’ and the outcomes – which are actual beings and doings - ‘functionings’ (figure 2.1).

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<sup>21</sup> ‘Wealth is evidently not the good we are seeking, for it is merely useful for the sake of something else’ (Aristotle, cited in Sen, 2009:253).



**Figure 2.1 Simplified model of the capability approach (adapted from Robeyns, 2005a)**

The approach encourages evaluators to question the extent to which people have genuine access to capabilities. A key point here is that theoretical or legal opportunities may not necessarily translate into real avenues that a person is genuinely able to pursue. A girl may have the legal right to attend school, for example, and even be enrolled in a school, but if family commitments, floods or hunger prevent her from attending she does not have the freedom, or the capability, to be educated<sup>22</sup>.

Advocates of the capability approach argue that while income is an important means of procuring well-being and freedom it cannot provide all that intrinsically matters to people. The approach introduces other dimensions in which to evaluate welfare. Poverty, for example, can be identified in terms of capability deprivation (Tilak, 2002) and attempts to reduce poverty should aim to enhance capabilities rather than just focus on increasing resources (Jackson, 2005). The capability approach represents a shift away from the focus on basic needs that dominated development discourse in the mid- to late-1970s and expands the human capital approach that was popularised in the early 1990s<sup>23</sup>. In a capability discourse it is argued that maximising capabilities has fundamental value for

<sup>22</sup> In some applications of the approach the relationship between resources and functionings is explained by conversion factors. Personal conversion factors (for example strength or intelligence), environmental conversion factors (for example climate or geographical location) and social conversion factors (for example social norms or laws) influence how a person is able to achieve specific functionings from the resources at their disposal (Robeyns, 2005a).

<sup>23</sup> '... the broadening that is needed is additional and inclusive, rather than, in any sense an alternative to the human capital perspective' (Sen, 1999:296).

human well-being (Tilak, 2002) and that quality of life should be judged partly in terms of what people can do or be in order to lead a life they consider to be of value (Qizilbash, 1997).

### *The list debate*

The generalness of the capability approach is often pitched as its distinctive value, although it is suggested that potential users may be put off by its non-intuitive phrases and the appearance of many ambiguities<sup>24</sup>. Alkire (2002:8) admits that the approach may seem unwieldy, and the phrase 'valuable beings and doings' seems to cover a generous terrain 'from friendships to fragrance to job satisfaction'. One resolution has been the more precise clarification of what constitutes a valuable functioning. This has led to one of the most established discussions in the capabilities discourse, a contest between philosophy and democracy (Claassen, 2011). Sen and Nussbaum in particular have publicly debated the question of whether or not it is appropriate to construct a general list of capabilities or functionings against which disadvantage can be measured. As Sen developed the approach, to some extent, because of his dissatisfaction with the 'basic needs' approach to poverty measurement, it is unsurprising that he refuses to commit to a set of basic functionings. He defends this decision by arguing that no one set of functionings would be appropriate in every evaluation (Alkire, 2005): to assume otherwise would undermine the underlying epistemology of the approach<sup>25</sup>.

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<sup>24</sup> For example the ambiguity between capability, capabilities and capability set. In this study, as in Gasper (2007) they are used interchangeably and refer to Sen's original definition of capability: 'the extent of her possible freedom' (Sen, 1993:31). Adapted and adaptive preferences also tend to be used interchangeably,

<sup>25</sup> Sen once suggested that material functionings (for example being nourished) could be separated from mental functionings (for example being content) (Sen, 1984 in Alkire, 2005) and also introduced a subset of basic capabilities (Sen, 1987). These basic capabilities encompassed things 'necessary for survival' to provide a cut-off point in defining deprivation (Robeyns, 2005:101). But Sen later returned to a focus on 'living standards' that encompassed all valued functionings (Alkire, 2005:118). His more recent work does not reference these subsets (for example Sen, 2009).

One reason behind Sen's reluctance to commit to a list is his understanding of the broad and flexible nature of the approach, with applications possible outside of the sphere of poverty and deprivation analysis (Robeyns, 2005a). The 'intentional breadth' (Alkire, 2005:118) means that the approach can be relevant in a wide range of circumstances and evaluations, with capability lists constructed according to the specific needs and desires of those at the centre of the evaluation. This represents what Claassen (2011:491) terms the democratic position. Sen also envisages its use in more focused empirical applications and argues that there is often good sense in 'narrowing the coverage of capabilities for a specific purpose' (Sen, 2004:74). Nussbaum, on the other hand, has composed a list of capabilities with ten categories that cover life, bodily health, bodily integrity, senses (including imagination and thought), emotions, practical reason, affiliation, other species, play and control over the environment (Nussbaum, 2000)<sup>26</sup>. This list is Nussbaum's answer to the Aristotelian question: 'What activities characteristically performed by human beings are so central that they seem definitive of a life that is truly human?' (Garrett, 2008:1) and, therefore, represents what Claassen (2011:491) terms the philosophical position. In her writings about justice Nussbaum situates these capabilities as akin to human rights and a minimum of what justice requires for all (Nussbaum, 2003).

Sen, however, claims that under-definition allows everyone to 'perceive a space for themselves in a project' and encourages the approach to grow (Gasper, 2007:336). By everyone he refers not just to researchers from a range of disciplines but to research participants too; in evaluations of policies that may impact on well-being Sen (2004) argues that the people who will be affected by the policies in question should have a say in what will count as valuable capabilities. Sen's insistence that lists of capabilities should be context-dependent inspires a key critique of Nussbaum's list, which is accused of being

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<sup>26</sup> See Nussbaum (2000) for expanded descriptions of each capability.



'not just paternalistic but even rather colonial for an American philosopher to determine the central capabilities for other societies' (Stewart, 2001:1192). In her defence Nussbaum insists that her list is humble, open-ended and open to interpretation and development, but she also argues that her work leads towards a list of 'central human capabilities' (Robeyns, 2005a:103) that citizens have the 'right to demand' (p.105) and that a fixed list is necessary if the capability approach is to be operationalised at the national level.

### *Concepts of advantage*

The capability approach is set apart from other means of evaluating well-being through its focus on functionings (what people can achieve). Yet a focus on functionings alone would invite the same criticisms as an approach that focused solely on utility. What the capability approach offers is a distinction between two sets of assessment criteria; the contrast between agency and well-being and the distinction between freedom and achievement. Once a list (whether pre-existing or original) has been determined, assessment of a person's capability can be evaluated in four distinct but related 'concepts of advantage':

- well-being freedom (the opportunity to achieve well-being)
- well-being achievement (the extent that well-being has been achieved)
- agency freedom (the opportunity to pursue and bring about the goals one values)
- agency achievement (the extent to which these goals have been achieved)

Different evaluations require a focus on different concepts of advantage (Sen, 2009:287).

### *The capability approach and education*

Because its roots are in economics the capability approach has mostly been used to analyse the situations of and develop policies around enhancing the well-being of deprived people (Alkire, 2002). However, there are parallels between the rejection of utility-focused evaluations of well-being in development and shifts from input/output-focused international education discourse to a focus on processes and quality. Although Sen's own writing around education has been criticised for being under-theorised (Tao, 2008; Unterhalter, 2003), the use of the approach in education studies is growing<sup>27</sup>. It has emerged as an 'assertive, alternative discourse to dominant human capital ideas in education' that allows us to see beyond education only as a means to employment and challenges what education 'enables us to do and be' (Walker, 2006:163); thus it is understood that a person's functionings are affected by their educational experiences.

Sen's earlier writing about capability considers education as one component in the spectrum necessary for development. He refers to education as one of a 'relatively small number of centrally important beings and doings that are crucial to well-being' (Sen, 1992:44). This understanding has been interpreted as education being broadly equated with 'literacy, knowledge or information' (Walker, 2006:163) and synonymous with 'schooling' (Unterhalter, 2003:8). This is problematic because it assumes that education is a uniformly delivered capability. Unterhalter (2003:8) references the 'considerable empirical evidence' that suggests in many contexts education and formal schooling ensure capability deprivation. Kirk too (2004; 2006) highlights how schools can perpetuate discriminatory gender practices. In such situations education could be considered to

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<sup>27</sup> The Journal of Studies in Philosophy and Education (Hinchcliffe and Terzi, 2009), the International Journal of Education and Development (Tikly and Barrett, 2011) and the Journal for Human Development and Capabilities (Walker, 2012) have devoted special issues to the capability approach and education.

contribute a capability deprivation because it may prohibit or limit male and female choices rather than expand them.

In his later writing about development freedoms (1999) Sen refers to education as a feature of capability space within which exist facilities that enable freedom. He suggests that education enables the expansion of an individual's freedom for a number of overlapping reasons; it is instrumental in helping a person to get a job or engage in economic opportunities, for example, but it is also a valuable achievement in itself. He claims these facilities, and resulting freedoms, depend on local social and economic arrangements (Dreze and Sen, 1995; Sen, 1999; Walker, 2006), but ultimately holds that education is an 'overarching capability that should expand other capabilities; whether it be gaining skills, gaining opportunities that these skills afford, or gaining other intrinsically important capabilities' (Tao, 2008:4). In short, critics of Sen's writings about capability and education hold that he sees education as 'an unqualified good for human capability expansion and human freedom' (Walker and Unterhalter, 2007:8). Unterhalter (and others) remains dissatisfied with his view of education as an 'uncontoured space unmarked by contested power, history or social division' and believe that even his acknowledgement of uneven education provision and quality still fail to take account of 'education facilities or processes that might not enhance freedom' (Unterhalter, 2003:10).

While these criticisms are not wholly valid<sup>28</sup> they are particularly interesting when you consider the parallels that can be drawn with Sen's own dissatisfaction with ends-based theories of development. Considering education only as a force for good (or bad) implies

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<sup>28</sup> Nussbaum and Sen's book *Quality of Life* (1993) begins with a passage from Charles Dickens' *Hard Times* to demonstrate that it is not just the availability of education that is important but 'poor quality education may actually diminish the thriving of its pupils' (p.1). The dissatisfaction of his critics, therefore, may relate to the fact that such examples do not show how education interacts with other factors in individuals' lives. For example he assumes a direct link between women's education and reduced fertility as well as improved education quality and heightened environmental consciousness (Sen, 2009).

its value lies primarily in its outcomes. If Sen is dissatisfied with the end-based assumption that all people are able to utilise a dollar in an equal and equally productive way, it seems similarly problematic to assume that all people are able to use educational ends (for example literacy, numeracy or a primary school leavers' certificate) in an equal and equally productive way, or that equal value is placed on these ends by different people. The skills, beliefs and values of teachers, for example, as well as social norms, are crucial factors here.

The capabilities literature predominantly focuses on theoretical explorations of the approach. Sen, for example, has never provided a formula for use (Grasso, 2002:3). Sen's lack of engagement with the fine details of empirical application enables it to be used 'for different types of analysis, with different epistemological goals, trying on different methodologies, with different corresponding roles for functionings and capabilities' (Robeyns, 2005b:193; Sen, 2004).

Empirical applications of the approach to education issues, however, are increasingly common. A prominent use has been the development of an index to measure national progress towards EFA – the Education Development Index (EDI) – which is a composite evaluation of four of the six EFA goals<sup>29</sup>. Inspired by the UNDP's Human Development Index (HDI), a country's progress is scored between 0-1. On a smaller scale Watts and Bridges (2006) use the approach to analyse young people's aspirations in Britain in the context of a British government White Paper on Higher Education. Arends-Kuenning and Amin (2001) contrast the Human Capital and Capability Approach in an analysis of perceptions of women's education in rural Bangladesh. Patel (2003) analyses literacy

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<sup>29</sup> Universal Primary Education (UPE) ratio, adult literacy rate, gender parity in education and overall quality of the education system (measured as survival rate to grade 5) (UNESCO, 2003/4; 2009).

NGOs in India through a capability framework to see how they empower women to fight against gender inequalities. In Sub-Saharan African contexts Walker (2006; 2007) examines a series of interviews with 40 South African school girls and draws on this data to develop a list of capabilities that promote gender equity in South African schools. Smith and Barrett (2011) explore capabilities for learning to read among grade 6 learners in Southern and Eastern Africa.

In these studies there is a clear focus on how the capabilities of learners are expanded (or not), the capabilities of teachers are rarely considered<sup>30</sup>. Two studies are available that suggest that the capabilities of teachers are an important focus too. Yates (2007), while tentatively exploring the idea rather than reporting robust empirical research, provides interesting insights into how the approach could be used to understand how teachers work and what they value. Tao (2009; 2012) explores the capabilities of teachers and pupils in Tanzania to show how the impoverished environments of their schools contribute to capability deprivation and lead to negative behaviours. Yates suggests that a programme of textbook provision in Kenya represents a utility focused approach to education improvement; he suggests that the capability approach might instead focus on teachers' capabilities to use textbooks effectively. This is a narrow interpretation of the approach; Sen emphasises that the approach is concerned with the ability to achieve combinations of valued functionings (2009) but Yates' purpose is to show that there are different ways of thinking about teachers' work and that a focus on capabilities can provide an additional perspective. It is on this perspective that this study draws.

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<sup>30</sup> Tikly and Barrett (2011:9), for example, state that for quality education to exist the capabilities of 'learners, parents, communities and governments' must be considered. The Research School for Education and Capabilities (2011) (in Germany) lists 73 possible research topics for doctoral theses. Only one focuses on the capabilities of teachers.

## **2.4 Guiding ideas for this study**

In this study the capability approach enables this additional perspective by providing a lens through which to view what is valued in teachers' work and a way of evaluating their agency freedom to pursue and achieve the things that are valued. The study presents two 'organisational picture[s]' (Sen, 2009:18) of teachers' work. The first is drawn from official perspectives on what is valued in teachers' work, expressed in national documents around teachers and education and by education officials from the five focus countries. The second organisational picture is constructed from the perspectives of female teachers working in rural contexts in these five countries.

This dual approach situates the study in a broader framework that considers Education for All to be an international project but one that also needs to be relevant to the local contexts and lived realities of teachers and learners. It acknowledges that if education is to contribute to the expansion of learners' capabilities (and therefore national and international development) then it must be good quality and teachers should be able to ensure that learning takes place in their classrooms and that this enables pupils to contribute to national development (Nussbaum, 2006; Tikly and Barrett, 2010). It also acknowledges that perceptions of quality and effectiveness are locally as well as nationally determined (Alexander, 2008) and that if education is to be good quality then teachers must be considered as agents rather than inputs (Yates, 2007).

What teachers think about education is an important aspect of this debate, but it is also crucial to understand what teachers are able to do in their classrooms. Therefore, as well as using the capability approach to frame the exploration of what is valued in teachers' work, the study will also focus on understanding what facilitates the pursuit of these values

as well as the obstacles that prevent them from achieving what is valued (Sen 1993). Through this focus on values, agency and achievement the study determines, but also goes beyond the organisational pictures of teachers' work and 'includes the life that [they] manage – or do not manage – to live' (Sen, 2009:18).

#### ***2.4.1 Teachers, values and freedom***

The capability approach is fundamentally interested in the freedom people have to live the type of life they wish through the freedom to pursue the things that they value. Exploring and defining what is valued in teachers' work from different perspectives represents a departure from frameworks of officially determined teacher competences that are more commonly used to define what is expected of teachers (Banks, 2009; Barnett, 1994). Korthagen (2004) writes about the idea of a 'good' teacher and asserts that the two central questions determining the design of teacher education programmes are i) 'what are the essential qualities of a good teacher?' and ii) 'how can we help people to become good teachers?' He claims that the complexity of these questions 'seems to be overlooked by policy makers' (p.78). Competence approaches to teachers' work have been criticised for their potential to 'fragment, technicise and decontextualise' teachers' work rather than transform and extend their professional growth (MCEETYA, 2003:2).

Since the start of the twenty-first century there has been a shift towards teacher standards. This is evident in both high income and low income countries, including in the focus countries in this study (see for example DocN1/2008). However, the distinction between competences and standards is often unclear. The potential for failure in terms of competences or standards is largely laid at the feet of teachers and often disregards the notion that education might be a shared project between teachers, their employers and

those they teach. Seeking an understanding of what is valued from different perspectives places less emphasis on rigid criteria against which teachers are measured and provides a space for exploring other goals that teachers may choose to pursue for the good of their pupils.

Therefore, while this study is interested in the freedom teachers have to pursue the things that they value, it is important to emphasise that using the capability approach is not to argue for the replacement of officially-determined teacher competences, nor that teachers should have the freedom to do whatever they want. Rather it hopes to identify officially valued aspects of teachers' work and compare them to rural, female teachers' professional 'value-objects' (Nussbaum and Sen, 1993:32) (as well as value-actions and value-behaviours) and explore the reasons these are valued and the factors that facilitate or hinder their pursuit and achievement.

This potential tension points to a key debate in the capability discourse. As a liberal, philosophical framework the capability approach acknowledges and respects the different choices people make in their pursuit of the 'good life' (Robeyns, 2005a:101). However, the 'good life' does not equate necessarily to good human behaviour; the approach can therefore be criticised for assuming that people are able to 'develop a reasoned understanding of valued beings and doings' and that what is valued is also good (Unterhalter et al, 2007:13; Deneulin, 2002; Gasper, 2007). Crocker (in Alkire, 2002) argues that the approach is unable to discriminate valuable capabilities from evil capabilities. Alkire (2002) suggests a need for more exploration into how to distinguish between the two, while also distinguishing between the ethical and unethical pursuit of valued functionings.



These considerations are especially relevant when exploring capabilities in a professional context where teachers are under contract to act in a certain way. The way in which this study is using the terms 'agency' and 'value', therefore, need unpacking. The definition of agency used in this study is 'the ability to pursue goals that one values and has reason to value' (Sen, 1999:19). In constructing the first organisational picture (which focuses on what is officially valued in teachers' work) this study acknowledges that teachers are contractually obliged to fulfil the tasks and objectives expected of them by their employers. It argues first that teachers contractually 'have reason to value' these objectives and second, argues that teachers should, at the very least, have the freedom to pursue and achieve officially determined goals of their profession – that is, they should have the capability to do their job. Whether teachers can and whether they choose to pursue these officially valued goals or not will be considered in the analysis of teachers' agency freedom and achievement.

This analysis will also be applied to the list of functionings and capabilities that are drawn from the teachers' perspectives. Sen highlights the importance of seeing individuals in the context of the social influences that operate on them:

'...when someone thinks, and chooses and does something it is, for sure, that person and not someone else who is doing these things but it would be hard to understand why and how he or she undertakes these activities without some comprehension of his or her societal relations' (Sen, 2009:245).

The literature review showed how a focus on individual teacher identity grew from a dissatisfaction of seeing teachers as a uniform cohort. Sen also argues that there is an increasing tendency to see people in terms of one dominant identity and that this is both

an 'imposition of an external and arbitrary priority' and a 'denial of an important liberty of a person who can decide on their respective loyalties to different groups' (Sen, 2009:246-7). Constructing the second organisational picture, therefore, will explore what teachers have reason to value in their work and where these values (and reasons) stem from.

#### ***2.4.2 Teachers, lists and agency***

This study is influenced by Sen's perspective in the debate around lists, particularly in his suggestion that there is often good sense in 'narrowing the coverage of capabilities for a specific purpose' (Sen, 2004:74). This study is interested in professional capabilities for teachers and in the organisational pictures of their work rather than the general pictures of their lives. The first organisational picture, constructed from official perspectives, will represent their work as a list of officially valued professional capabilities (defined here as the substantive freedoms valued in the work of teachers) and their corresponding functionings (the doings and beings necessary to achieve the professional capabilities). The second organisational picture will represent the argument that good quality teaching responds to the specific needs of pupils and communities and teachers should have a degree of freedom to incorporate these specific needs. In this second organisational picture it is expected that teachers' capabilities will be defined by their own personal understandings of education, of their schools and of the communities in which they teach.

Constructing these lists of capabilities and functionings, therefore, requires specific investigative work, rather than extrapolation from Nussbaum's existing list (2000). This investigative approach aligns the study with the democratic position of capability definition (Claassen, 2011) and the idea that selecting capabilities should be a participatory process (Robeyns, 2005b; Sen, 2004; 2009). Through an analysis of official documents around

teaching and education, and through an analysis of teachers' narratives this study aims to construct and present two organisational pictures of teachers' work and then, through an analysis of teachers' narratives and ethnographic data, understand how teachers work within and between these pictures.

The literature review for this study uncovered a wealth of empirical information about teachers and teaching in Sub-Saharan Africa; much is known, for example, about the conditions under which teachers work. This literature paints a dismal picture of material poverty (e.g. low salaries and inadequate housing), hard labour (e.g. long working hours and insufficient resources), emotional poverty (e.g. weak professional identity, low morale and self-esteem), discrimination and social exclusion (e.g. low status and negative media representation). Of the four possible concepts of advantage Sen (2009) proposes for evaluation then, it is tempting, as Tao (2009) has done, to evaluate teachers' capabilities in the well-being space. Tao takes the 'capability approach's view of poverty reduction from a country context and appl[ies] it to that of a school context'. Her justification is that 'schools can be contexts for inequality – much like a poverty stricken village – but instead teachers and students are the deprived residents' (p.6).

This study is more interested in how the capability approach might provide insights into how teachers perceive and can pursue the goals that are valued in the primary level teaching profession, i.e. evaluating teachers' capabilities terms of the agency they have to do their job. It is often implied that teachers in rural schools are passive recipients of the challenging working conditions they face. Through a focus on the concepts of advantage that include agency freedom and achievement, the study acknowledges that teachers are actively involved in shaping their own lives (Sen, 1999). It aims to explore how teachers

develop as professionals as they face and negotiate these challenging conditions in order to realise, pursue and achieve valued goals.

It has already been emphasised that this study does not suggest that teachers should be free to do what they want. It would also be misguided to assume that what teachers' value contributes equally to their well-being as well as the well-being of their pupils. Sen deals with such issues in his defence of the approach against the critique of methodological individualism, While the pursuit of teacher well-being is important, a focus on agency 'shifts the focus away from seeing a person just as a vehicle of well-being'. A focus on agency acknowledges that a person may use this to 'uplift the lives of others, especially if they are relatively worse off, rather than concentrating only on their own well-being' (Sen, 2009:288-289). Teachers exist in a 'social world' (*ibid*) and, particularly in rural environments, these social worlds may be characterised by disadvantage that extends beyond their own individual circumstances. Therefore, a teacher's 'objectives and priorities could stretch well beyond the narrow limits of [their] own personal well-being' (Sen, 2009:290).

### **2.4.3 Teachers, gender and capabilities**

This study focuses on women teachers because the literature suggests that men and women experience teaching differently and, with regards to teachers in rural schools in particular, these differences are not adequately understood. It is important, therefore, to set out how gender is understood in the capabilities literature.

The study acknowledges that gender is socially constructed. However, it goes further to understand gender not only in terms of society and culture, but also in terms of agency

and identity. As shown in section 2.3.1 identity is now understood to be fluid and changeable rather than a stable core. So too can gender be considered as a fluid notion; not just as something that structures social relations and positions women and men in particular ways, but something that they may 'do' differently at different times in their life (Unterhalter, 2007). Gender 'signifies something about the attributes of the person while acknowledging that these are changeable and entail freedom and agency, as well as the constraints of constructed social relations' (p.89). Being a teacher in a rural school may affect women and men differently, but this is not to say that it will affect all women or all men in the same way at the same time.

This understanding of gender aligns with the capability approach. Unterhalter (2007) emphasises that Sen does not advocate 'capabilities that we value as such, but capabilities that we have reason to value after self-reflection and open debate' (p.100). Studies of capabilities, therefore, should critically engage with all factors that shape people's preferences and influence the choices that are made from available freedoms. Unterhalter's understanding goes some way to addressing a concern of Nussbaum and Sen (1993:5) who claim 'in no area are there greater problems about measuring quality of life than in the area of women's lives and capabilities.'

These problems relate to what, in capability literature, is referred to as 'adaptive preferences' (Sen, 1985; 1992), where people living in adverse situations may nevertheless be relatively content with their circumstances. A deprived person might, for example, adjust their desires in the direction of realistic possibilities. Once they have adjusted their desires they may be content even if they are not well-off and their agency and well-being may be diminished even if they do not realise it (Walker and Unterhalter, 2007; Qizilbash, 1997). Adaptive preferences are most commonly discussed in terms of

women's capabilities when their lives, and aspirations, are constrained by strictly enforced, deeply embedded gender norms (Nussbaum, 2000)<sup>31</sup>. This is an especially important consideration in this study of female teachers in societies with strict gender norms; what the teachers' value must be considered in terms of these norms (although not only in these terms). Sen has not provided a solution to the adaptive preference debate, although his position is similar to Unterhalter's (2007) in that he suggests that analyses of a situation should not draw exclusively on subjective accounts (Sen, 2009)<sup>32</sup> and that all factors that potentially influence the freedoms that people enjoy and have reason to value 'deserve careful scrutiny' in evaluations of capabilities (Sen, 1999:9).

While it is important to acknowledge that teachers' values and preferences may be adapted, therefore, it is important that this is something to arrive at through careful and critical analysis of their situations rather than begin with the assumption that this is the case. As highlighted in section 2.2 of this chapter, this study will attempt to stand out from existing literature by not assuming that teachers' experiences of rural schools is predominantly negative. Nor will it assume that (because they are women) the teachers' values are not of their own choosing. Though a focus on teachers' contexts and agency it hopes to understand their capabilities rather than pre-empt them.

This point is closely related to how this study sits within a broader feminist literature. Much work that falls within the feminist movement is focussed on women's oppression; this is the case both in high-income countries and in literature specific to African contexts. Kelly et al (1994:28) for example claim that the purpose of feminist research is 'to understand women's oppression in order that we might end it.' The reason much feminist research

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<sup>31</sup> Nussbaum however, also implies that all people's preferences are adapted since everyone's subjective choices are shaped and informed by the society they live in (2000).

<sup>32</sup> '...it is difficult to desire what one cannot imagine as a possibility' (Nussbaum and Sen, 1993:5).

focuses on women, they continue, is because if we are to understand the multiple sources of women's oppression we need to focus on the ways women's lives are structured and constrained by the actions of men, both individually and collectively (p.33). Similarly Lay and Daley (2007:50) define a 'feminist lens' as one that sees 'individuals, groups, family and organisations in their social, political, economic, ethnic and cultural contexts. The intersection of these contexts produces the potential for oppression that is rooted in gendered relationships.' Equally, from African feminist literature, Bennett (2008) and Imam et al (1997) write how the fundamental concern of African feminist research is to address discrimination and injustice.

Other African feminists place less emphasis on oppression and discrimination. Pereira (2002), for example, highlights how feminist writing should focus on how societies, policies and economies can be structured to support human development. In fact, Pereira's article (on imagining new spaces for feminist scholarship in Africa) implicitly acknowledges elements of the capability approach by claiming that individuals and institutions need to support political, economic and cultural changes to enable new ways of being and the capacity to imagine alternative lifestyles. This study is guided by this alternative view of feminist writing that assumes a forward looking, positive approach to gendered human development and, in particular, a gendered approach to understanding the development of women teachers' agency to pursue and achieve valued professional capabilities.

## **2.5 Chapter conclusion**

This chapter has shown how it is widely accepted that there is a shortage of teachers in Sub-Saharan Africa and that governments face huge challenges in persuading teachers,

and in particular female teachers, to work in rural schools. What is known about teachers who do teach in rural schools is largely focused around the challenges and negative aspects of their environments. There is very little information available that shows how teachers in rural schools work (and think about their work) beyond or in spite of the challenges they face. This pervasive negativity means that governments have little leverage with which to attract and retain teachers in rural schools.

It is also suggested that teachers are failing pupils by not providing a good quality education, yet while a key debate in international education studies is how the quality of teaching and learning and school processes can be improved there is little consensus yet about what a good quality education or indeed a good quality or effective teacher is. In addition little attention has been given to how teachers' perceive their roles as educators, how they understand the purpose of the education they are expected to deliver in their schools and how they navigate between the expectations of a range of stakeholders. The literature also suggests that education policy is written for urban teachers in urban schools and does not reflect the reality of rural environments. Therefore, teachers in rural schools are caught between potentially different understandings of education and expectations of their work: that which is understood by the government for which they work and that which comes from their own experiences. This study is interested in how teachers navigate between these understandings.

A 2010 UNESCO report states 'we have, in fact arrived at a situation in which Africa is teaching without teachers' (Obanya, 2010:34). This implies that these understandings of teachers' work are conflicting because teachers are reportedly not working in a way that is expected of them by national governments and the international agendas they subscribe to. This chapter has shown how existing approaches to understanding teachers'



professional lives fail to capture the relationships between what is valued in teachers' work, what teachers are able to do in their work (their agency freedom) and what teachers choose to do in their work (their agency achievement). It has suggested that exploring teachers' professional lives through a framework based on the capability approach may be able to capture these relationships. Through the application of the capability approach to the issues raised in this chapter the thesis will answer the two final research questions:

- iv. What new insights can the capability approach provide into researching the professional lives of teachers and what are the limitations of this approach?
- v. To what extent could the capability approach influence the way educational governance operates in relation to teachers?

The next chapter shows how the study has attempted to answer these and the other three research questions.

## *Cameo 2 A day in a head teacher's office*

(Isibane School, South Africa, 4<sup>th</sup> August 2010)

**08:11:** There are already five people queuing up outside Mandisa's office. I joke 'Another busy day?!' She smiles. 'It's always like this, it is always like this, I don't know why I bother having the sign outside [with visiting hours on it] because they will always come anytime'.

**08:22:** A woman who was taught by Mandisa when she was a child has moved to the area specifically to enrol her daughter in Isibane because she has 'so much respect for this lady'.

**08:59:** Mandisa is meeting with a local businessman who is sponsoring one of her pupils. 'The boy is so dedicated to his education but he is an orphan. Do you know he attended his mother's funeral in Cape Town, caught the over-night bus and arrived at 7am. He hitched a lift to the township and came right into school. He is eleven! I sent him home to rest but that day I realised he would go far'. The businessman has agreed to financially support the boy up to university level.

**11:00:** Mandisa greets a health officer (provided by the district education office) who will spend the day assessing the needs of the poorest children. She gives her a list of the children they need to pay particular attention to.

**11:16:** A construction worker comes into the office. Mandisa is trying to get him to lower the price of re-paving the very pot-holed playground because the recent water shortages in the township meant she had to buy expensive water tanks for the school.

**12:39:** A social worker comes into the office to discuss a 15 year old boy who repeatedly turns up to school drunk. He is HIV positive and an orphan. The social worker wants to know why he has not been attending his treatment sessions at the clinic. Mandisa explains that the boy was living with her for a while until her own adopted daughter (also HIV positive) contracted meningitis and was admitted to hospital 50 miles away. Mandisa could not care for both children on her own and asked the boy's aunt to take him in. The aunt, who is an alcoholic, spends his foster grant (which is supposed to cover his bus fare to the clinic) on alcohol. The meeting ends with no solution for where this boy can live.

**13:25:** A union rep comes in to discuss the potential strike. Mandisa says 'ok if you strike you strike but it is not an excuse to be lazy... and you know the children will turn up anyway because they would rather be here than at home'.

**13:40:** A mentally disturbed man from the location wanders in staggering and demanding money off everyone. Mandisa shoos him out of the office [an hour later he is still on the school grounds].

**14:08:** Another social worker comes in to discuss a girl who is being beaten up at home. I am asked to leave this meeting for confidentiality reasons.

**14:30:** Mandisa has a meeting with a business man who is donating money to her main project: a secondary school in the township. 'The two that exist are so disappointing. I want my learners to go onto a great school. I want to leave a legacy'.

## Chapter 3 Methodology

### 3.1 Introduction

The methodological approach of this study is informed by understandings around teachers' lives and work that were identified in chapter 2. In particular the approach intends to draw out the interplay between teachers' work, narratives, values, and agency to pursue and achieve professional capabilities. Underpinning the methodological approach is a constructionist and interpretative epistemology (Denzin and Lincoln, 2005; Noblit and Hare, 1988; Stainton-Rogers, 2006).

Before enrolling as a full-time PhD student I worked as a researcher for the TESSA (Teacher Education in Sub-Saharan Africa) programme. TESSA is an international consortium researching and developing Open Educational Resources (OERs) for teacher education and development. The idea for this PhD grew out of a study (Teachers' Lives) I designed and carried out for TESSA in response to its desire to know more about teachers who would be accessing the OERs – particularly those working in rural areas where access to computers and the internet (where most OERs are hosted) is limited (Buckler, 2009a). The thesis uses data collected in two stages. The first stage refers to the data collected for Teachers' Lives (in 2007-2008) and the second stage refers to that which was collected over the course of the PhD-studentship (2009-2011). The thesis focus has developed inductively in response to the stage-one data, recent literature about education, capabilities and social justice and a second stage of fieldwork that incorporated the perspective of education officials and official documents. The impact of my involvement with TESSA is discussed in sections 3.5 and 3.6 but it is important to set out at the start of

this chapter how I am connected to this field of research and where the origins of the study lie.

The first two research questions reflect an interest in what is valued in teachers' work from official and teacher perspectives. Official perspectives were drawn from national education documents and interviews with education officials. Teacher perspectives were drawn from fieldwork in rural schools using a broadly ethnographic approach. Lists of professional capabilities and functionings were constructed to represent these perspectives. The third research question aims to understand the extent that female teachers in rural schools are able to pursue and achieve functionings and capabilities in these lists and drew once more on the data from the field visits. The final two research questions are of a more reflective nature and were answered through revisiting the analysis of the empirical data.

This chapter shows how the study was designed to answer these questions. Section 3.2 discusses the paradigms in which the methodological approach is situated. Section 3.3 shows how documents and participants were selected and outlines and justifies the methods used. Section 3.4 discusses the analytical framework that was used to structure, make sense of and represent the data. Section 3.5 highlights ethical considerations pertinent to this study and section 3.6 describes some challenges associated with and limitations of the methods.

### **3.2 Framing the research**

This study sought to highlight official perceptions of teachers and teachers' own descriptions of their lives and values. There was, therefore, a strong narrative angle to the

methodology which utilised ethnographic techniques and was situated within a qualitative research paradigm.

### ***3.2.1 A qualitative research paradigm***

Because of the level of detail necessary for this analysis it was decided that a predominantly qualitative approach was most appropriate. Qualitative approaches seek to understand the world through interaction, empathy and interpretation (Bryman and Burgess (1999) in Brockington and Sullivan, 2003), 'centre attention on human elements' (Knowles, 1992:113) and help researchers to understand what 'makes our world meaningful for people' (Brockington and Sullivan, 2003:72).

Within this approach, however, some quantitative data was also collected. Monitoring times throughout the school day (for example noting down how long lessons took and how time was divided between teaching and marking) and counting (pupils, teachers, books, desks, etc) contributed towards the thick description (Delamont, 2008; Walford, 2009a; 2009b) and in forming 'consistency judgments' across the data (Miles and Huberman, 1994:253). Numerical Likert scales were also used in questionnaires and teachers participated in ranking exercises during focus groups: these exercises were not designed with a view to providing numerical data but to structure the qualitative data collection for the participants and to inform my interpretation of this data<sup>33</sup>. In the analysis numerical exercises were used to determine the significance of themes in official documents and the teachers' and education officials' narratives and to provide a way of patterning the data around the teachers' abilities to pursue and achieve valued functionings.

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<sup>33</sup> For example, asking teachers in the focus groups to list valued aspects of teaching in order of importance provided them with a framework within which to consider and debate these aspects of their work.

The prioritisation of qualitative data collection does not imply any questioning of the value and usability of large-scale numerical data around teachers in Africa, and other regions of the world, and the impact these have had on policy change (for example the UNESCO Global Monitoring Reports and the data collected to support UNESCO's TTISSA (Teacher Training Initiative in Sub-Saharan Africa). An increasing number of quantitative studies in education and development research adopt a twin approach of substantiating and explaining statistics with case-studies (see Pillai and Alkire, 2007). Both are important and can generate complementary knowledge necessary for understanding and improving teachers' lives (Buckler, 2011).

However, the richest insights into teachers' experiences – necessary to obtain the level of detail required in this study – appear to draw on qualitative methods. Barrett (2005b) justifies her qualitative approach by its ability to 'yield descriptive data and [be] responsive to culture' (p.7). Others write how, in attempting to 'foreground the lived experiences' of teachers, they were led towards 'a cluster of research methods associated with the qualitative research paradigm' (Akyeampong and Stephens, 2000:8).

### ***3.2.2. Combining ethnographic and narrative approaches***

To capture teachers' experiences and to understand their perspectives on their work this study adopted ethnographic techniques within a narrative approach: it used explicitly ethnographic techniques to produce the thick description necessary in ethnographic scholarship and also a range of narrative portraits (Silverman, 2007; Smit and Fritz, 2008). Narrative researchers are interested in people's experiences, the meanings people ascribe to their experiences, and how these experiences are narratively constructed (McVicker Clinchy, 2003). The narrative researcher then re-tells the stories to give meaning to

broader contexts and issues (Gudmundsdottir, 1997; Chase, 1995; Trahar, 2006). In this study the narratives of teachers and of documents are analysed and re-told in this way.

The narrative approach, which is considered 'an umbrella term that covers a large and diverse range of approaches' (Trahar, 2006:260), has grown considerably and gained credibility over the past three to four decades (Elliott, 2005; Goodson, 1991; Jessop and Penny, 1998). Some narrative studies prioritise structural or content analysis. Moreira et al, (2008:1185), for example, evaluate 'degrees of presence' of certain words or phrases and Labov and Waletzky (1967) present a structural model that reduces narratives into six consistent elements<sup>34</sup>. In the early stages of data analysis I experimented with these with small samples of data but found them un-revealing. I was interested in what the teachers said and why they said these things rather than what was encoded within the language they used. Since the teachers were communicating in their second language and there are differences across cultures between how people narrate stories (Barrett, 2005b) it would have been difficult to capture this robustly. I, therefore, adopted a thematic rather than structural approach to narrative analysis.

While interviews provided some narratives around teachers' professional values, a full understanding is difficult to capture through interviews alone and additional data gathering was necessary (Razavi, 1999). This additional data-gathering was inspired by methods common to ethnographic studies.

A description of the main methodological features of narrative research dovetails with those of ethnography. First, due to the potentially large quantity of data generated by small

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<sup>34</sup> Abstract (summary of the subject matter); orientation (information about the setting); complicating action (what actually happened, what happened next); evaluation (what the events mean to the narrator); resolution (how it all ended) and coda (returns the perspective to the present) (Labov and Waletzky, 1967).

numbers of participants, narrative research studies tend to be conducted on a small scale (Elbaz-Luwisch, 1997; Lieblich et al, 1998). Secondly, both ethnographic and narrative studies tend to begin with general research questions rather than strictly defined hypotheses (Glaser and Strauss, 1967; Lieblich et al, 1998). Thirdly, in both there is a strong emphasis on context, interpretation and meaning: 'No matter how rich, beautiful, haunting, eloquent or descriptive the narrative, if it does not offer a glimpse into larger issues then it is not a story worth telling (Gudmundsdottir, 1997:2). Similarly: 'one could do a participant-observer study from now to doomsday and never come up with a sliver of ethnography... the essential ethnographic contribution is interpretative rather than methodological' (Wolcott, 1980:56). Fourthly, given that oral testimony is a key ethnographic method (Brockington and Sullivan, 2003) and ethnography is made up of 'many different conversations of different kinds' (Burgess, 1984:140) both approaches give a high status to the accounts of participants.

In many respects then, combining ethnographic techniques with a narrative approach is a short methodological leap and it is accepted that there is considerable overlap between the two (Clifford and Marcus, 1986; Gubrium and Holstein, 1999)<sup>35</sup>. In this study I felt that ethnographic techniques would enhance the opportunities for finding out what teachers valued and understanding how they were able to pursue valued goals.

Walford (2003:4) suggests seven minimum requirements of ethnography:

1. A focus on the study of culture

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<sup>35</sup> While ethnographers appear to appreciate the merits of a combined approach, some narrative researchers express reluctance at being subsumed under the ethnographic umbrella. The introduction to the Handbook of Narrative Inquiry states that ethnographers were purposefully excluded from contributing chapters (Clandinin, 2007).



2. The use of multiple methods and thus construction of diverse forms of data
3. Direct involvement and long-term engagement
4. Recognition that the researcher is the main research instrument
5. A high status given to the accounts of participants and their understandings
6. The engagement in a circle of hypothesis and theory building
7. The focus on a particular case rather than on any attempts to generalise.

This study meets Walford's requirements in the following ways:

- It began with relatively open research questions around the lives of female teachers in rural schools (1).
- It inductively developed understandings of (and questions about) how teachers experience these environments (6).
- It involved shadowing seven focus teachers (4 and 7) conducting and facilitating semi-structured interviews, focus groups and questionnaires (2 and 5).
- It also analysed a large body of documents relevant to the teachers' lives (2).
- Research was carried out during a series of field visits over a period of five years (3) with analysis taking place both between visits and after the fieldwork phase (6).

As outlined in chapter 2, the theoretical framing of this research was provided by the capability approach. A useful guide to using the approach empirically comes from Robeyns (2005b) who defines three epistemological goals with which to align a specific study, and suggests appropriate methodologies and the role of functionings and capabilities within each goal (Table 3.1):

<b>Epistemological goal</b>	<b>Methodology</b>	<b>Role of functionings and capabilities</b>
Welfare / quality of life measurement	Quantitative empirical	Social indicators
Normative theories	Philosophical	Part of the philosophical foundations
Thick description / Descriptive analysis	Qualitative empirical	Elements of a narrative

**Table 3.1 A guide to the empirical use of the capability approach (from Robeyns, 2005b)**

This study aligns itself with Robeyns' third epistemological goal of thick description and descriptive analysis and this alignment supports the decision to combine ethnographic and narrative approaches to data collection.

Ethnographic techniques held additional attractions. The extended contact with participants and the range of methods provided the opportunity to collect as much data as possible. Through these methods I imagined I would be able to get to know each focus teacher well enough to understand their routines and their every day experiences (Fetterman, 1998; Hammersley, 1992), constantly check what I learnt, and challenge or corroborate these understandings with supplementary data in the form of questionnaires and focus groups. In doing so I would also have time to verify or challenge existing understandings of teachers' experiences that I had learnt about from the literature.

This privileging of narrative, and an understanding that my interpretation of these narratives influences how they are produced, collected, analysed and reported is important in terms of both the teacher and official perspectives (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1983; Holliday, 2007). Acknowledging how knowledge is constructed through different interpretations is not only fundamental to my research questions (which seek to understand different perspectives on what is valued in teachers' work) but also important

in terms of positioning this study and acknowledging critiques of more traditional ethnographies which fail to question who has the right to speak for a group (Falk Moore, 2001; Holliday, 2007). Through ethnography I aimed to produce 'highly descriptive writing about particular groups of people' (Silverman, 2007:305). Through narrative I aimed to ensure different perspectives were highlighted. By combining these I intended to generate a rich corpus of data from which teachers' values as well as their agency to pursue and achieve capabilities corresponding to these values could be revealed.

### ***3.2.3 A feminist epistemology***

This study draws on my background in gender and development studies<sup>36</sup> and is informed by feminist epistemology. It aims to map how 'gender, women and knowledge have been constructed' in the teachers' lives (Oakley, 2000:4) and how these constructions affect what they value and influence how able they are to pursue these values. Academic justifications for focusing on women teachers were presented in chapter 2 but there were also logistical reasons. In the communities I planned to research in focusing on male teachers may have been difficult<sup>37</sup> and, in some, inappropriate. Indeed, in Nigeria and Sudan, when I interviewed male education officials at school the teachers insisted the door was left open to safe-guard our reputations.

Being a woman made me accessible to the teachers and my age positioned me as a potential friend to the younger teachers while the older teachers tended to 'mother' me. I was regularly invited to the teachers' houses, to visit friends with them and to attend their churches. In Sudan I attended a teacher's 'hen-do' and in South Africa I drank home-

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<sup>36</sup> I have an MPhil in gender and African studies from the University of Birmingham, UK.

<sup>37</sup> Barrett (2005b) suggests that the reason she was unable to categorise two of the teachers in her study was because cultural differences prevented the collection of sufficient data. These teachers were both male.

brewed liquor as a goat was slaughtered and burnt to honour ancestors. These invitations were sometimes pitched as an opportunity to see the 'real life' they led, occasionally I sensed that I was being 'shown off' to their friends and neighbours, but mostly they appeared to be acts of kindness and hospitality. I sensed that as a woman I was seen as 'unthreatening', provided I didn't challenge gender norms (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1983:84)<sup>38</sup>. During the second field visit to Nigeria the head teacher's husband died. Regular visits to the head teacher in her home where she was undertaking the requisite three months of mourning were not presented as an option – the implication was that, as a woman in the village, it was my duty. I accepted every invitation I was offered seeing each opportunity as a further glimpse into teachers' real lives – something more effectively achieved through friendship rather than formality (Zweig, 1949)<sup>39</sup>.

While feminist and qualitative research are often presented as synonymous, others reject this assumption and argue against the conflation of research methods and politics (Seale, 1999). In fact, some definitions of feminist methodology did not resonate with my approach; particularly those which resonate with the feminist literature discussed in chapter 2 and imply that feminist research only exists to provide insight into gender inequality (Fonow and Cook, 1991). By contrast, this study was interested in what women teachers value and do in their work, not how women teachers' experiences are negatively gendered (although it was open to this being a finding).

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<sup>38</sup> In other schools, however, I developed friendships with both female and male teachers. One male teacher at the Kenyan school became a pivotal gatekeeper for the research. He not only welcomed me into his family and community, he was influential in encouraging teachers to attend the focus group and, crucially, on my first day at the school, invited me to eat ugali in the teachers' kitchen: an event which became a daily occurrence and provided some of the richest insights into the Kenyan teachers' 'off duty' lives.

<sup>39</sup> For example a Sudanese colleague regularly passes on news and greetings from Sabeera. I exchange letters with Cecilia and I visit Ruth and her family when I am working in Cape Coast. As Oakley suggests, feminist research has challenged the idea of 'extracting information from research informants and sought a more reciprocal relationship between researcher and participants' (2000:16).

This study is, therefore, informed by a feminist epistemology, rather than a feminist methodology: that is, informed by a way of thinking rather than a way of doing. The closeness I developed with the teachers resonated with Bell and Encel's description of social research: 'complex, messy, various and much more interesting (1978:4). This closeness was not planned, per se: while 'in theory it should be possible to establish confidence simply by courtesy towards and interest in the interviewees... in practice it can be difficult to spend eight hours in a person's home, share their meals, listen to their problems and at the same time remain polite, detached and largely uncommunicative' (Corbin, 1971:303). Acknowledging my lack of detachment requires an acknowledgment of how the research process was gendered, how, by being a woman, I was more readily admitted into the teachers' lives (Oakley, 2005) and how this affected the kinds of information given (Corbin, 1971). I was also aware of how the friendships between me and the teachers affected how I interpreted and how I represented this information. This is explored further in section 3.5.

### **3.3 Data sources and collection**

This section describes the pilot study, how it helped to inform the data sources and how the data was collected during two stages over five years. It explains how the official documents were sourced and sorted, how access to education officials was facilitated and how the schools and focus teachers were selected. It also describes the range of data-collection methods used.

### ***3.3.1 The pilot study***

In December 2006 I travelled to South Africa for meetings at the University of Fort Hare. A colleague arranged for a female teacher to visit the campus so I could pilot the Teachers' Lives interview questions. While her narratives were detailed and eloquent, the context in which I was capturing them (a meeting room on the university campus) was artificial. The teacher was talking out of context and, because of time constraints, stories were compressed. It seemed important that the teachers' narratives should be embedded in a more natural situation and be allowed to develop over time.

The inductive nature of this study meant that Teachers' Lives, which constituted stage one, also acted as a pilot – both epistemologically and empirically - for the second stage. Its broad nature gave insights into a wide range of issues that affected the teachers' lives and the data suggested which avenues would be most interesting and fruitful to pursue in stage two. The trust earned with the teachers enabled me to ask far more specific and detailed questions during the second stage in which the focus of the PhD was defined around teacher roles, values and capabilities. Stage one also enabled me to see how a consideration of official values around teachers' work – drawn from documents and interviews with education officials - would enrich the study.

### ***3.3.2 The official context***

The official context referred to in this study represents a decade of policy perspectives around teachers' work in the five focus countries. The study addresses a field of policy, rather than a specific policy in itself (Potter and Subrahmanian, 2007) or the policies around teacher education in a specific country. Official perspectives were drawn from interviews with education officials at different levels of policy formulation and enactment

and documents published in the focus countries since 2000. This approach was chosen over a focus on the most recent policies for four reasons.

First the rapidly changing policy environment means that it is very difficult to capture an up-to-date policy picture of each country and the relevance of the findings would date more quickly than the broader focus used here. This justification is in line with the understanding that policy is constantly developing and is better viewed as a process rather than something discrete or static (Thomas, 2007). Secondly, chapter 2 revealed the failure and delay of policies to reach rural schools. The most recently published policies may not have yet reached the teachers so focusing only on these could have skewed the analysis of their agency to pursue valued functionings extrapolated from these policies. Thirdly as my own access to documents differed across the five countries, focusing on only the most recent documents may have skewed the values extrapolated from these documents towards the values of the country whose documents were most freely available. Fourthly an analysis of the policy environment over the last decade reflects the timeframes of the MDG and EFA agendas. It made visible the alignment of official perspectives with these agendas and highlighted where national priorities differed. Rather than a policy analysis, therefore, this study is an analysis of the policy environment around teachers and their work in the five countries.

#### *Official documents*

In total 52 documents were analysed. Documents were initially collected on an ad hoc basis from the following sources:

- TESSA colleagues in partner institutions
- Participants in the study

- Ministry of Education resource centres
- University and teacher college libraries
- School libraries and staff rooms
- Online repositories

As the body of documents grew (to nearly 100) I decided that I needed to be more critically selective. Aware that documents do 'not simply reflect, but also construct social reality' (May, 2001:183) I started to ask questions of my documents in order to make visible their partiality (Blaxter et al, 2006). The partiality of documents does not invalidate them as data: in fact, chapter 4 shows how understanding this partiality adds richness to the analysis. However, it was important that I drew on a balanced sample.

For each of the five countries I determined that:

- All documents would be published since 2000<sup>40</sup>.
- A minimum of five (but preferably 10) documents would be analysed.
- At least one document would be written by the government for teachers.
- At least one document would specifically focus on the roles and responsibilities of teachers.
- At least one document would focus on the general role of education in national development.
- At least one document would be written by the government for an international agency.
- At least one document would be written by the government for the general public.

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<sup>40</sup> Two documents (DocSA8 and DocSU2) were published in 1999 but written for an event that took place in 2000.



- At least one document would be a report of education by an international agency.

The Sudanese document search necessitated a further stipulation:

- Sudanese documents focusing just on southern Sudan would be rejected. Sudanese documents focusing on the whole of Sudan would be treated with caution (because of the differences in infrastructure and policies between the north and south prior to secession in July 2011).

Documents were accessed in electronic and hard copy depending on their source. Documents that were accessed in libraries or resource centres, or borrowed from colleagues, were photocopied<sup>41</sup>. Appendix 1 shows the full list of documents analysed.

#### *Interviews with education officials*

TESSA colleagues and the teachers suggested possible officials to interview. The remit was that they should work as employees of the education system and be directly involved with the work of teachers. My TESSA connections enabled access to very senior policy makers. However, time constraints, diary clashes and uneven access to people with relevant contacts, meant some difficulties were encountered in interviewing a balanced range of officials across the five countries and none of the officials I was able to interview were female. In total ten interviews were conducted with officials ranging in superiority from school supervisors to the Director General of the Ghana Education Service. Appendix 2 shows the full list of interviewees.

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<sup>41</sup> One exception to this was a handbook on teacher roles in South African schools (DocSA2/2003) that I found in the head teacher's office. The school photocopier was broken and looked unlikely to be fixed before I left. Hammersley and Atkinson (1983:164) – before digital cameras were widely accessible - claim in such situations there is 'little alternative to making painstaking copies'. Instead I took photographs of each page of the document and printed them out when I got back to the UK.

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with each official. A core list of questions was constructed around their interpretations of teachers and their work but they were encouraged to talk about other related issues they felt strongly about. Interviews tended to take place at their place of work and were recorded with a digital recorder. They lasted between one and two hours.

### ***3.3.3 The teacher context***

#### *Site and participant selection*

The five focus countries (Ghana, Nigeria, Kenya, South Africa and Sudan) – originally selected for the Teachers' Lives project - were chosen because they represented the breadth of the TESSA consortium geographically, culturally and linguistically. TESSA coordinators for institutions within the focus countries acted as gatekeepers for the project (Crang and Cook, 1994). Each coordinator was asked to select a primary school against the following criteria:

- A location considered by the coordinator to be rural yet...
- ...where it would be possible for me to stay close to the school for the duration of each visit.
- As far as possible be representative of an average school with respect to catchment area and achievement.
- Led by a head teacher who was interested in and would support the study.
- Had female teachers working there who were willing to participate in the study.

Appendix 3 presents a summary of the schools selected.

In each school the TESSA coordinator and the head teacher selected one female teacher to be the focus teacher. Specifications for the focus teacher were not as detailed as the criteria for the school, although it was requested that they represent the head teacher's idea of a normal teacher and were proficient in English<sup>42</sup>.

The intention was that one teacher<sup>43</sup> would be selected at each school to be a focus teacher. However, it proved possible to collect data from additional teachers. In South Africa three other teachers volunteered to participate in the study. In Ghana I spent a lot of time with the focus teacher's best friend who also taught at the school. In Nigeria the focus teacher, who was studying part-time, was on exam-leave for some of the fieldwork. Another teacher volunteered to take her place during these days. In total, after five years and ten visits I had collected data from twelve teachers. While it was a difficult decision I decided it was necessary to reduce the number of teachers for the PhD. I retained the original five and two more. These were retained because their stories stood out as presenting notably different experiences of teaching than the original focus teachers and I felt that inclusion of their values would add to the analysis<sup>44</sup>. The teachers are introduced in chapter 5.

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<sup>42</sup> English proficiency was a particular consideration in Sudan. In the other countries the teachers had been educated in and were expected to teach in English, in Sudan the language of instruction is Arabic. The Sudanese focus teacher was an English teacher, although I also learnt some Arabic and employed an interpreter to assist with interviews at the Sudanese school.

<sup>43</sup> In South Africa one focus teacher was the head teacher. When I was preparing to travel to South Africa in 2007, I received an email from the head teacher: 'Unfortunately the teachers have now declined. They identified such activities as one of the reasons we have persistently failed to complete our School Development Plan. This is deeply regretted because I realise you are nearly on your way! However, if you are willing to work with a school principal instead I would not mind' (Excerpt from an email, August, 2007). I had little choice but to accept her offer to be the focus teacher.

<sup>44</sup> The data from the other five teachers was not analysed because I either felt that inclusion would not add a particular richness to the story or because I did not feel the data I collected was sufficient to analyse alongside the rest.

The fieldwork consisted of two stages in each country between 2007 and 2011. For each stage I visited each school for a period of 2-4 weeks. In total just over six months were spent in schools, with the teachers, collecting data. Table 3.2 summarises activity in the two stages.

Date	Country	Data collection
<i>Stage 1 (Teachers' Lives)</i>		
February 2007	Ghana	Shadowing, interviews, focus group, questionnaires
March 2007	Nigeria	Shadowing, interviews, focus group, questionnaires
October 2007	South Africa	Shadowing, interviews, questionnaires
November 2007	Kenya	Shadowing, interviews, focus group, questionnaires
December 2007	Sudan	Shadowing, interviews, focus group, questionnaires
<i>Stage 2 (PhD)</i>		
April 2009	Kenya	Shadowing, interviews, focus group, questionnaires
August 2009	Ghana	Interviews
February 2010	Sudan	Shadowing, interviews, focus group, questionnaires
August 2010	South Africa	Shadowing, interviews, questionnaires
February 2011	Nigeria	Shadowing, interviews, focus group, questionnaires

**Table 3.2 Summary of data collection**<sup>45</sup>

During the fieldwork I strove to live as similar a life to the focus teachers as possible, shadowing their daily patterns of travelling and teaching. The schools were selected in part to convey this 'message of commitment' (Scheyvens and Storey, 2003:88). I felt strongly about the alternative message that staying in an expensive hotel and arriving in my own vehicle would convey and avoided this where possible. Appendix 4 shows the different accommodation arrangements during the fieldwork and their similarities with the teachers' own arrangements.

<sup>45</sup> I did not follow up the questionnaires with a focus group in South Africa because I was very aware of the teachers' concerns about the research adding to their existing workload. In the second stage of fieldwork in Ghana Ruth had married and moved in with her husband and had also moved schools. It was not possible to shadow her to the same extent although I was able to meet with her several times for interviews and informal conversations.

### *Interviews*

In the first stage of fieldwork three interviews were conducted with the focus teacher. The interview questions were piloted with the teacher in South Africa and refined. They provided logically ordered transcripts (based around the teachers' history, present and anticipated future). This biographical structure (Acker, 1999) was designed to complement the shorter narratives recorded in every day conversation.

In the second stage of fieldwork interviews served both as a catch-up with events in the teachers' lives and to investigate ideas around values, agency and capabilities in more depth. In this second stage the design of the interview schedules drew on advice from both ethnographic and narrative fields. They were designed to reveal 'the cultural context of lives through an engaged exploration of the beliefs, values... and the structural forces underpinning socially patterned behaviour' (Forsey, 2008:59) and I always tried to follow up questions with responses such as 'how so' and 'can you tell me more about that' – asking for 'clarification, specification, elaboration, concrete examples and, especially, stories' (McVicker Clinchy, 2003:37).

Interviews tended to take place on school grounds, usually in the teachers' own classrooms or in the head teacher's office. Where possible I tried to ensure they took place in classrooms. Here, teachers tended to be more relaxed because there were fewer distractions but also because it was their own space. They were more interactive, getting up to show me some work or the register or gesturing to specific parts of the room to illustrate their point. Being in classrooms also seemed to influence the power relations between us: teachers were more relaxed and more confident. Often they would be in their chair and I would be opposite or next to them, perched on a bench. In the head teachers'

offices I was made to sit in the head teacher's chair which gave the impression of authority and teachers seemed less at ease.

### *Shadowing*

Interviews alone may have revealed what the teachers valued but shadowing offered additional insights into this, as well as into how the teachers were able to pursue valued goals. It offered 'privileged access' to how they actually behaved (Silverman, 2007:91). Indeed Jessop and Penny (1998:399) suggest that relying on interviews to collect teacher narratives limited their study; 'we have no way of ascertaining the story's link with actual events' and Convery (1999) suggests that relying on interviews alone can fail to acknowledge where teachers use narrative to 'construct a self-image as a consistently moral individual' (p.131). In order to match the teachers' rhetoric with the realities of their teaching – to understand how their values related to what they were actually able to pursue and achieve – I spent as much time as was possible and appropriate with each teacher in the classroom, the staff-room and at home with their families. Although all of the teachers were wonderfully engaged in the project and welcomed me into their personal spaces, shadowing involved a high degree of sensitivity and judgment.

In the first stage of fieldwork I took extensive notes. This practice was refined in the second stage using Delamont's (2008) guide to ethnographic note taking. She suggests using a range of different notebooks for different stages of observation and analysis. As well as this, I was, somewhat conversely, reassured by Emerson et al (2007) who warn that exhaustive real-time field-notes can interfere with the fieldwork and Jackson (1990) who argues that field-notes cannot capture the depth and subtlety of real encounters with others' ways of living. In the second stage of the project, I was more critical of how I balanced experiencing and capturing details about the teachers' lives. I ensured a

structured approach to recording data while taking care not to prioritise writing events over witnessing them.

### *Questionnaires and focus groups*

Questionnaires were given to the focus teachers' colleagues. In stage one they gathered general information about experiences and perceptions of the teaching profession. In stage two they focussed on teachers' perceptions of their roles in the school, their community and their country. Because of my constant presence in the schools the return rate was nearly 100% across all sites.

After the questionnaires were collected, the focus teacher and I went through the responses and identified themes to develop in the focus group. The focus groups were conducted at the end of each visit when I had got to know the teachers better. This familiarity helped teachers to be more relaxed and familiar with the project (Brockington and Sullivan, 2003). In the first stage of the study the focus group sought teachers' perceptions of what it was like to be a teacher in a rural school. In the second stage the activities were more geared towards understanding what the teachers valued in their work. After an ice-breaking activity I lay cards in the centre of the group. On each card an official role was written (drawn from education documents from that country). Teachers were asked, as a group, to place the cards in the order of importance they thought they would be written in official documents. They were then asked to place the cards in order of importance from their own perspectives. Finally they were asked to discuss any additional roles they thought were missing from the list. The discussions were captured using a digital recorder and photographs were taken of the final lists.

## **3.4 Data analysis and representation**

### ***3.4.1 Data processing***

This study yielded a vast quantity of data: 60 hours of audio, ten exercise books of field-notes, 70 questionnaires and 52 documents. While transcribing is described as tedious (Fountain in Cupples and Kindon, 2003) I found it to be a useful stage of the inductive research process. I tended to transcribe interviews and focus groups soon after they took place. While this provided an activity to fill the evenings, it also helped to inform and shape themes I could follow up on the following day. On occasion when I was too busy or where transcription was not possible (in the teachers' hostel in Sudan there was only one plug socket which I felt uncomfortable using for my work) I would transcribe the interviews back in the UK and discover threads I wished I had followed up in the village.

I chose to transcribe manually because I felt it was a stage of early analysis. A colleague suggested that 1 hour of audio required 4-5 hours transcribing: transcribing therefore took hundreds of hours and, with the evocation and memories involved, seemed to enrich the analysis process. I set up an NIVO8 account with the intention of analysing my data through the software but found that the tangible nature of coding on hard copies of the data suited me better. NVIVO8, however, became a useful store and quick retrieval point for my data. It was also useful to have a 'clean' store of the data - unencumbered by codes - to which I could return and digest holistically rather than be distracted by labels.

### ***3.4.2 Data analysis***

Just as the data collection took place in two stages, so did the data analysis. This inductive approach was necessitated by the logistics of my previous employment for TESSA and



subsequent PhD studentship – as chapter 2 showed, a focus on capabilities emerged as a response to the initial data and literature review. However, analysis in both stages followed Chase's (2003) guidelines for thematically coding narrative data. I also used these techniques with the documents, field-notes, focus group transcripts and questionnaire responses – treating these as narratives too. For the first stage I had no specific agenda against which the coding was aligned – I was simply looking for emerging themes. In the second stage I returned to all of the data and re-coded it, focusing on values, agency, choices and achievements. These themes related to the evolving research questions and reflected how the capability approach was beginning to frame the study.

As well as writing informal 'memos' in the margins of documents, interview transcripts and field-notes (Robson, 2002:478), I found writing 'interpretative comments' as I analysed the data particularly helpful (Chase 2003:80). Chase suggests, at each natural stopping point in the transcript, writing a paragraph about 'what is going on' (p.92), using the following questions as a guide:

- What is this person communicating?
- How does the interaction between you and the interviewee facilitate or hinder the story?
- What do you think is important or particularly interesting about this passage?
- What social factors help you to understand what is going on here?

The themes, supported by these paragraphs formed the basis of categorising the data (Blaxter et al, 2006:210).

Through the analysis I tried to ally myself with the research participants and 'see the world from [their] particular perspective' (McVicker Clinchy 2003:32). The additional data from the field-notes assisted this. This interpretation was 'primarily personal and empathetic rather than impersonal and detached'. This position also helped to mitigate issues that Holliday (2007) suggests can arise in qualitative research when verbatim data is awarded unquestionably high status. He argues that verbatim data – like all data – must be 'managed for its subjectivity' (p.61). Contextualising the teachers' narratives, and those in the official documents, by interpreting them in the personal, social and environmental contexts from which they were derived – and my own interpretations of these contexts – contributed towards this management. The themes were expanded into extended pieces of writing about what the documents and the teachers presented as valued functionings in teachers' work.

Descriptions of what was valued helped answer the first two research questions and contributed much of the text for chapters 4 and 5. However, in order to position the data within a capabilities framework it was also important to extrapolate from these values lists of capabilities and functionings that represented each of the perspectives. By drawing on the perspectives of the literature, policy documents and participants the study was informed by Robeyn's procedural approach to selecting capabilities (2005), but more specifically by Alkire (2008:2) who proposes five methods of deciding 'what matters' in selecting functionings and capabilities. This study draws on her fifth suggestion of selecting dimensions based on empirical studies of people's values or behaviours<sup>46</sup>, or more specifically, on the narratives of the documents, the narratives and actions of the teachers and the values discussed and agreed upon in the focus groups. In deciding which

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<sup>46</sup> The other four methods are: draw on existing data; make assumptions – perhaps based on a theory; draw on an existing list that was generated by consensus; use an ongoing deliberative participatory process (Alkire, 2008).

values to include I drew on Walker (2006): a valued aspect of teaching was counted as a functioning if at least one person identified it and if it was considered important by the majority.

In total three lists were generated. From the documents and the interviews with the education officials a list of official functionings was constructed and these were clustered into capabilities that represented substantive freedoms related to the work of teachers. The official capability of 'respect', for example, represents (among other functionings) the anticipated freedom of teachers to be treated as dignified professionals. From the teachers' narratives and actions, individual lists of valued functionings were drawn up for each teacher<sup>47</sup>. By combining these individual lists with the data from field-notes, questionnaires and focus groups (therefore taking into consideration the views of a wider cohort of teachers) a teacher-generated list of functionings was constructed. As with the official functionings the teacher-generated functionings were grouped into capabilities through a process of exhaustion and non-reduction until no functionings were left out (Robeyns, 2005b). No ranking or weighting of capabilities was attempted (Walker, 2006).

A different type of analysis was necessary to answer the third research question which focuses on the extent to which the teachers are able to pursue and achieve functionings within the different lists of capabilities generated by the two perspectives. For each list – the individual lists, the teacher-generated list and the official list – professional capability was determined. To facilitate this, a method for determining each teacher's capability was established.

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<sup>47</sup> While these conform to what Sen (2009) might call subjective accounts and therefore not sufficient grounds on which to conduct an analysis of capability, it was decided that they were an important empirical starting point from which to understand teachers' values more generally.

The method was inspired by Anand et al (2009) who – in a quantitative analysis of capabilities among 1000 people in the UK - extrapolated a list of questions and indicators from Nussbaum’s list of human capabilities (2000). In my study questions were developed that mapped on to the list of teacher functionings that made up each list of professional capabilities. Two sets of questions, extrapolated from the official and teacher-generated lists of capabilities, were then ‘asked of’ the qualitative data. The first set (QA) was designed to determine agency freedom (the ability to pursue each functioning) and the second set (QC) was designed to determine the achievement of these functionings. An example is presented in table 3.3:

<b>Official Capability (OC)</b>	<b>Functionings (F)</b>	<b>Questions for data – agency (QA)</b>	<b>Questions for data – achievement (QC)</b>
1.Recognition	<i>Achieve the minimum qualification for teaching</i>	Can they achieve the minimum qualification for teaching?	Have they achieved the minimum qualification for teaching?
	<i>Register as a teacher and...</i>	Can they register as teachers?	Have they registered as teachers?
	<i>...maintain registered status.</i>	Can they maintain their registration?	Have they maintained their registration?

**Table 3.3 Extract from the list of official capabilities**

The total number of functionings for each capability (x) corresponds to x number of questions for agency and achievement.

$$OC_a = F_x = QA_x = QC_x$$

For example, three functionings (F<sub>3</sub>) make up the official capability of recognition (OC<sub>1</sub>):

- i. Achieve the minimum qualification for teaching

- ii. Register as a teacher
- iii. Maintain registered status

These three functionings correspond to three questions (QA<sub>3</sub>) asked of the data to determine teachers' agency freedom in respect of this capability:

- i. Can they achieve the minimum qualification for teaching?
- ii. Can they officially register as teachers?
- iii. Can they maintain their registered status?

The three functionings also correspond to three questions (QC<sub>3</sub>) asked of the data to determine teachers' agency achievement.

- i. Have they achieved the minimum qualification for teaching?
- ii. Have they officially registered as teachers?
- iii. Have they maintained their registered status?

Therefore:

$$\mathbf{OC_1 = F_3 = QA_3 = QC_3}$$

The questions relating to agency (QA) were deliberately phrased as 'can the teacher...?' to emphasise that the capability approach is interested in the freedom to achieve functionings, as well as in these achieved functionings. Focussing solely on achieved functionings 'does not necessarily incorporate the freedom to decide which path to take or the freedom to bring about achievements one considers to be valuable' (Alkire, 2005:120).

Considered in the answers to each question about agency was whether or not the teacher understands that this is a functioning that is expected of them. If, for example, they do not realise that they are supposed to be well-versed in the national constitution (a functioning within the capability of loyalty) it is argued that they do not have the freedom to pursue it.

This study is interested in what teachers do, but also why they do what they do. The questions about achievement (QC), therefore, sought to determine whether or not the teachers choose to pursue and achieve the functionings. If a teacher *can* pursue a certain functioning but doesn't, the space between agency and achievement is where teachers' choices can be explored and better understood. Clearly if the answer to the agency question (QA) is 'no' then the teacher does not have the freedom to pursue that functioning and responsibility for the resultant limitation on their capability set lies outside their control; there is no point asking QC and the area for exploration is the space between the functioning and agency – i.e. what prohibits the pursuit of this functioning.

In the analysis, answers to the questions were deliberately limited to 'yes' or 'no'. For each 'yes' the teacher was allocated 1 point, for each 'no' the teacher was allocated 0 points. A 'grey area' column was included for when it was not possible to ascertain a definite answer, for example when there was insufficient data to answer the question or when it was too difficult to distinguish between freedom and choice. The scores are expanded upon in detail but were designed to serve as a preliminary way of making visible each teacher's overall professional capability.

### ***3.4.3 Representation of data***

As well as the more traditional text that makes up the data and analysis chapters – with findings illustrated by tables, figures and quotes - I have represented some of the data as cameos, or vignettes: ‘...focused descriptions of a series of events taken to be representative, typical or emblematic in the case’ (Miles and Huberman, 1994:81). At times the chapters require reference to a specific event. A full description would distract the flow of discussion; cameos enable additional detail and imagery without imposing on the narrative. These have been presented between the chapters of the thesis.

## **3.5 Ethical considerations**

As a student and representative of the Open University (UK) I was obliged to follow the university’s standard ethical procedures and was granted permission to carry out the research from the Human Participants and Materials Ethics Committee. I initially adopted an absolutist approach (Scheyvens and Storey, 2003) to the ethical construct of the methodology and to my expected ethical conduct in the field – following the committee’s rules to the letter. However, in the five very different fieldwork environments I found I had to be more flexible. In the field the ‘wider moral and social responsibilities of simply being a researcher’ (Kellehear, 1993:14) were occasionally, prioritised over the criteria formulated by the university. This section describes some decisions made in response to these responsibilities.

### ***3.5.1 Consent and access***

One aspect of the ethical guidelines I ensured was in place was obtaining informed and signed consent from the focus teachers, even though this practice has been criticised for

demonstrating excessive bureaucracy (Casey, 2001). As I was representing three reputable institutions (The Open University, the TESSA partner institution and TESSA) I felt it was imperative to uphold this expected practice. In addition the forms, which were printed on letter-headed paper with OU, TESSA and institution logos, boosted my credibility.

The process of providing information and obtaining consent, however, changed during the study. For the first visits to Ghana and Nigeria in 2007, I prepared a detailed document for the teachers that described the project in-depth. The consent form was attached to this document – with the assumption that the teachers would have read the document in order to read and sign the consent form. It became clear, however, that the document was too detailed and too academic – teachers signed the forms but still seemed unclear as to the purpose of the research. I developed a simpler, condensed pamphlet that introduced the project and invited teachers to a meeting to find out more. Consent was then obtained at these meetings. The TESSA coordinators also provided their contact details in case teachers had any queries or concerns that they felt unable to share with me during the project<sup>48</sup>.

Throughout the fieldwork I also became aware that permission and access are far more complex than a signature on a form (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1983:56). Teachers' 'informal permission', which is 'pursued and negotiated on a daily basis in the field' (Sheyvens and Storey, 2003:82) was a particular issue in the South African school. While I had official permission to enter this school, I was highly aware that negotiating access to classrooms and conversations with the staff would be extremely challenging. It was

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<sup>48</sup> None of the teachers did contact the coordinators, although I must accept that this does not necessarily mean they were completely comfortable with the situation.



imperative that I strove for a careful balance between assertiveness and respect in all of the field sites, and that I worked hard to gain acceptance and access. In South Africa especially I was explicitly aware of each increment I gained.

My connections with TESSA facilitated access to people and sites that it would have been far more difficult to access otherwise. While referrals to local education officials tended to come from the teachers and head teachers, referrals to senior officials came from TESSA contacts. The Ghanaian official, for example, was a school friend of a TESSA colleague. A senior official at the Sudanese Ministry of Education cheerfully used my access to him as an example of the lack of transparency in the education system:

‘On paper it is [transparent], but on the ground it is not. You see it’s our culture. The system is not working. Because you, for example. You want to interview me, you know Amani, Amani knows me... I will give you the time. But by paper, it would take you months to arrange an interview, it is very bad.’ (EOSU2/2009)

This put me in a difficult position because I was perpetuating a less than ideal situation to further my research.

Another issue that arose, particularly in the second stage of fieldwork, was the extent to which the details of my research were revealed to the teachers. Hammersley and Atkinson (1983) discuss this in terms of deception but in my study it was more a case of not wanting to overcomplicate the data collection. Oates (2006:215) claims that withholding information from participants ‘should only be done if the reasons for it have been thoroughly examined’. While I considered the implications of what I was telling the teachers I did not consider it ‘withholding information’ in quite the same way. I was interested in teachers’

functionings and capabilities but the capabilities literature is vast and complex and difficult to express in a simple way (I had already learned that in the earlier field visits I had overloaded the teachers with information). Instead, when asked, I said that my research was looking at the everyday lives of teachers – which was also true – and that I was interested in their perspectives on how they saw themselves and their work.

When the teachers pressed for more details (because they thought their ‘everyday lives’ could not be interesting enough to make me travel thousands of miles), I initially (and, in hindsight, mistakenly) said I was interested in the difficulties they faced as teachers. However, though this provoked outpourings of narrative it tended to situate me as a sounding board for their complaints (the teachers often requested that I passed these complaints on to the supervisors or local office). While this data was useful I tried to steer them away from a solely negative narrative and towards more mundane (and cheerful) aspects of their work.

### **3.5.2 Anonymity**

Closely linked to the issues of consent and access is my decision to give the teachers pseudonyms in the thesis. This decision was not made lightly. The teachers were known within TESSA (because they had been selected by TESSA coordinators) and it was explained to them that their identities would be disclosed amongst the consortium, but for any write-up for a wider audience they could opt for anonymity. On the consent forms there was a box the teachers could tick if they wanted their data to be anonymous. None of the teachers ticked this box.

I was initially inspired by Walford (2008). He challenges the 'default position' of providing anonymity for participants in ethnographic research sites and argues that in many cases this is simply a result of the 'access strategy', the contract the researcher offers to the person who will provide permission to enter the site (p.34). In reality, he claims, 'it is often actually impossible to offer confidentiality and anonymity' and it may be 'inappropriate and undesirable to try and do so' (p.32). He provides examples of anonymous studies for which it is easy to establish the location and even individual participants, a practice increasingly facilitated by the internet.

In addition, he argues that pseudonyms work to protect the researcher, rather than the researched. If a researcher is using the real names of participants and places, their need for accuracy and honesty becomes imperative. Researchers are able to 'hide poor evidence behind the pseudonyms' and readers are unable to verify the material (Walford, 2008:35). This was my first major study. Not only did I want it to be accurate, I also wanted it to be perceived as so. After spending long periods of time getting to know the teachers in this study, the suggestion that I might misrepresent them was upsetting. As the teachers had agreed to the use of their names I wondered whether it would be more honest to use them than not.

My final decision to use pseudonyms was prompted by a gradual understanding that my fear of negative consequences for the teachers was preventing me from being honest about their lives. At a departmental seminar in 2009 a colleague commented that I needed to 'stop liking my teachers so much'. She was right – affection was preventing me from critically examining their practices and I needed to extricate myself from this. While changing their names didn't completely alleviate my concerns, knowing that their real names would not be used in the write up did help. Of course, this decision does not

absolve my conscience, nor does it ensure that participating teachers will be safe from repercussions. Walford's description of how easy it often is to uncover anonymised sites and participants is even more pertinent in this study where TESSA colleagues are aware of and familiar with the teachers and where existing publications include the teachers' real names and locations.

### **3.6 Limitations of the study**

#### ***3.6.1 Bias***

I was keen that my TESSA colleagues didn't have an existing relationship with the school. I was also adamant that the teachers selected had not studied a course on which TESSA materials were used nor engaged with the materials independently. This was important to prevent any temptation to over- or under-interpret evidence to 'serve the interests of the organisation' (Hammersley, 2011:70) (TESSA employed me and were also part-funding my PhD). Using TESSA teachers may also have changed how the teachers viewed my presence, and it would be likely that engagement with the TESSA materials would have influenced their views on teaching.

The risk of bias in requesting that the head teacher select the focus teacher must be noted. While it was specified that they choose an average and representative teacher it is understandable that they may (consciously or subconsciously) have selected their favourite teacher, or a model teacher that would reflect well on the school: gatekeepers necessarily have concerns about representation (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1983). While this was unavoidable, where I suspected it to be the case, some notable qualities of a 'model teacher' (e.g. committed, punctual, enthusiastic, open-minded) were useful in

facilitating the research. Also, the choice of teacher provided insights into understandings about the head teachers' perceptions of a good teacher.

There was also a (realised) risk that the teachers would 'put on a show' so I would see them at their best (O'Sullivan, 2006). While frustrating, this only lasted for the first one or two days of fieldwork. In addition the 'model' lessons that I was ushered into early on provided insights into what was considered to be good teaching. However, I regularly emphasised that what I was interested in most was the mundane and the every day (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1983).

### ***3.6.2 Generalisability***

Walford (2008) also discusses generalisability in a way that resonates with this project. He draws on Nespor's discussion of the ontological and political implications of ethnographic research (2000, in Walford 2008). These, he argues, are compromised through the use of pseudonyms and the subsequent 'decoupling of events from historically and geographically specific locations' (Walford, 2008:35). If a site is not named it acquires a 'spurious generalisability... a school that could be any school, a school that is just one example of many'. Chapter 2 highlighted gender and geographical neutrality in literature about schools and teachers in Africa. The decision to adopt a small-scale approach for this research was a deliberate decision to explore in-depth some specific experiences of women teachers in rural primary schools. While it hopes that the findings of this study could be applied in a more general sense (the final two research questions in particular emphasise this), it is not implying that the inherently personal, professional and contextual experiences of the teachers are 'general', nor does it expect that not using the teachers'

real names increases their generalisability; indeed, the very different experiences of these teachers speak for themselves.

Nevertheless, a degree of generalisability is useful. Geertz (1973) shows how interpretative explanations allow readers to anticipate (though not predict) what might be happening in similar situations. Seale (1999) too claims a study will 'generate greater benefit if it can be a reliable guide to what happens elsewhere' and the 'goal of generalisation therefore seems worth pursuing if at all possible' (p.107). However, in interpretative research the role of the researcher must be acknowledged and it may not be possible to achieve what Geertz (1988:16) demands of ethnographers: they need to convince the reader 'not merely that they themselves have truly been there but... that had we been there we should have seen what they saw, felt what they felt, concluded what they concluded'. Acknowledging the influential role of the researcher on the research means one can aim only to 'provide the thick description necessary to enable someone interested in making a transfer to reach a conclusion about whether the transfer can be contemplated as a possibility' (Lincoln and Guba, 1985:316).

### ***3.6.3 Further considerations***

As well as the more commonly acknowledged limitations of small-scale studies outlined in 3.6.1 and 3.6.2 there are some more specific challenges worth acknowledging. As outlined in chapter 2 there is no single definition of rurality and this lack of definition is reflected in the diversity of sites in this study. The Sudanese site, for example, is far more remote than the Ghanaian village, yet unlike the Ghanaian village has running water and electricity. The South African school is based in a township not far from a large town, yet the facilities in the community are more limited than in the relatively remote Nigerian village (see

appendix 3). This relates to the generalisability of the study – while it focuses on rural schools the differences in how the gatekeepers of the study interpreted ‘rural’ reflect significantly different school contexts.

In relation to different interpretations of rural, the recent completion of a new road between the Ghanaian towns of Cape Coast (a medium-sized town in the central region) and Takoradi (a large town in the western region) has significantly decreased the ‘rurality’ of the Ghanaian school which is located in a village that now straddles this road. New technologies are also challenging notions of rurality. These examples reflect the tumultuous nature of people’s lives, particularly in low-income, developing countries. Another example is the post-election violence and disruption following the Kenyan general election at the end of 2007. This severely impacted the ethnically mixed regions around Nakuru, where the Kenyan field-site was. Pupils, teachers and their families at the school were attacked and they are still dealing with the longer-term impacts: internally displaced pupils are stretching the school’s resources and the government is yet to replace the teachers who fled the area. Such large-scale and life-altering events dwarf the details I am exploring in teachers’ professional lives. Throughout the study I have tried to acknowledge these wider contexts but also acknowledge that they are not the main focus.

It is also important to highlight the different capacities for getting close to each teacher and the impact this had on data-collection. In the first stage of fieldwork, for example, the Ghanaian teacher was a lonely 27 year old living in a small village. We were able to spend nearly all our time together. By the second field visit she was married and lived with her new family in the town. She did not have the time, and nor was it appropriate, to re-engage in such intensive research. The language barriers in Sudan also made it more challenging to engage freely in casual conversations with teachers. The quantity of narratives

(particularly the more informal narratives), therefore, differed between teachers, contexts and stages of the research.

Finally it would have been useful to get the communities' perspectives on what they value in terms of teachers' work. This would have added another dimension to the analysis. However, language barriers and time constraints made this infeasible.

### **3.7 Chapter conclusion**

This chapter has situated the research in a qualitative paradigm and explained how it is informed by feminist epistemology. It has shown how ethnographic and narrative methods were used to collect and analyse data in response to the research questions, but also how the methods incorporated quantitative elements. It has documented how the research took place over two stages, developing inductively between the two, and how the first stage influenced the second stage in terms of research questions, methods, analysis and ethics. Finally it highlighted some limitations of the study. The next three chapters present the data and analysis that resulted from this methodological approach.



## *Cameo 3 A Science lesson*

(Gadanan School, Nigeria, 10<sup>th</sup> February 2011)

As we sit watching the pupils and teachers drift into the compound Agnes tells me that she is going to do something exciting today, she is going to teach a Science lesson on mineral resources using practical exercises. We walk to the room where all three classes of class 6 pupils are crowded, four or five children to each bench designed for two or three, but another teacher, Raif, is already there writing on the board. Agnes, surprised, says 'oh, are you teaching class 6 then?' Raif says 'yes, we have Social Studies, but you can have them after'. Agnes looks put out but agrees, sits down and spends the next 20 minutes intervening in and correcting Raif's teaching, shouting at the children who talk or fidget, and chatting to the other teachers.

Raif tells the class to copy what he has written on the board. After a few minutes Agnes says 'ok, let's call this a day, let's move on to Science' (the children close their books with the copying half finished). She tells Raif to wipe the board and write 'Primary Science' and 'Topic: Minerals and their types' at the top. She hands Raif her book and tells him to copy the text onto the board.

The book was published in 1987. The chapter on minerals begins:

'Your teacher will take you to a museum of natural history. Go to the mineral section and write down what you observe... Back in the classroom use a hand lens to look at the minerals your teacher has provided.'

(The nearest museum of Natural History in Nigeria is in Ile-Ife, over 400km from Gadanan).

He writes: 'Minerals are very valuable substances which occur naturally underneath the earth. They are usually removed from the earth by a process called mining.'

He asks Agnes if this is ok, she nods distractedly because some of the children have started to copy the writing on the board into their books. She shouts at them to put their pencils down. Another teacher who has wandered in shouts: 'if you don't listen to your teachers I will slap you!' The children's talk gets louder as Agnes and Raif go through the list of minerals in the book, stumbling over the pronunciation of 'ore' and 'marble'.

The children troop outside where the sun is blazing hot. Some shelter in the shade of the classroom block but Agnes shouts at them to come close to her. It takes more than five minutes to gather all (100+) children around her and she shouts to some other teachers sitting outside the classroom to come and help her. Twenty minutes later the three teachers have just about organised the class into eight groups of 10-15 children, and given each group a letter (A-H), but they keep moving and the groups keep merging together. The teachers shout threats at the children 'If you don't stand still I will flog you', 'I will beat you if you don't move quickly'. Agnes tells Raif to go to each group and 'tell them what they are'. He moves round the compound giving each group a name, 'gold', 'tin', etc) in Hausa. As he does so I ask Agnes why she is using groups to teach this topic. She tells me how important it is that each group can focus on one thing, take responsibility for that area of the topic and then share what they have learnt with the rest of the class. She says that Science is not like other subjects, it needs visuals and activities like this one. She shouts at the pupils who are struggling to stand still in the heat. Children from other classes are hanging out of the windows to see what is going on in the compound.

The lesson is nearly over. Agnes goes round the class group by group reads two or three lines from the text book in English which Raif translates into Hausa, for example: 'Iron ore is an ore from which iron can be extracted. In Nigeria it can be found in Kogi State. It is used to make steel'. The children

are barely listening, jostling and talking amongst themselves, although one child in each group has been asked to take notes. The bell rings before Agnes has got round the whole class. She says to the last three groups 'You will get your turn next week'. To the others she says 'As a group I want you to prepare a project on your given mineral, now go to break'. I look at the paper of one of the note-takers, it reads: 'Ion or, Fatima, Amira, Ahmed'. At the follow-up lesson the following week no one can remember what group they were in and no one has prepared a project on their given mineral. Agnes writes the whole chapter verbatim onto the board and the children copy it into their books.

## Chapter 4 Teachers' professional lives: Official perspectives

### 4.1 Introduction

This chapter explores the official context within which teachers work to answer the first research question: How are teachers' roles officially understood in Sub-Saharan Africa and what do governments value in teachers' work? It also provides a backdrop for the final research question: To what extent could the capability approach influence the way educational governance operates in relation to teachers? It describes the findings of the analysis of national education documents and interviews with education officials from the five focus countries to present a more in-depth understanding of the formal, 'organisational picture' (Sen, 2009:18) of teachers' work<sup>49</sup>.

Section 4.2 presents the official idealised view of the role of teachers. Section 4.3 reveals a less than ideal depiction of teachers and their work. Section 4.4 highlights valued aspects of teaching and section 4.5 establishes a structure of professional capabilities and functionings that represent these values. Section 4.6 discusses national and international influences that appear to shape these values and section 4.7 concludes the chapter.

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<sup>49</sup> From this point 'documents' means the national and institutional documents analysed in this study. 'Officials' refers to the education officials interviewed. For the rest of this chapter 'data' refers to the official data which includes the documents and education officials' interview transcripts.

## 4.2 The role of teachers: the 'ideal'

While there are culturally and historically influenced differences regarding the roles of teachers<sup>50</sup> across the five countries, all are signatories to EFA. Interpretation of the role of teachers mostly echoes descriptions found in EFA literature and earlier UNESCO publications. The Recommendation Concerning the Status of Teachers report, convened by UNESCO and the International Labour Organisation in 1966, describes the 'essential role of teachers in educational advancement and the importance of their contribution to the development of man and modern society.' The report also claims that teacher preparation should develop 'an awareness of the principles which underlie good human relations, within and across national boundaries and a sense of responsibility to contribute to both by teaching and by example to social, cultural and economic progress' (UNESCO, 1966, section V, item 19). UNESCO's World Declaration of EFA (1990) references this 1966 definition of teacher role.

In each of the five countries a range of documents could be identified that expressed these views about the role of the teacher as a nation-builder. Teachers are portrayed as playing an essential role in the development of society at local and national levels:

'The provision of quality education involves adequate preparation of dedicated teachers who should provide the knowledge and skills required by the human resources of a nation. In view of this, teachers play a key role in nation-building, especially in human resource capacity building.' (DocG2/2004/22/7.1)

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<sup>50</sup> In South Africa teachers are generally called educators and pupils are referred to as learners.

[we envision]... teachers who understand the importance of their profession for the development of the nation and do their utmost to give their learners a good educational start in life.' (DocSA1/2010:11)

South Africa's Access to Education Quality document (DocSA6/2003) states that educators need to understand the nation building task at hand. While teachers are expected to be nation-builders, there is a defined architecture they are expected to adhere to<sup>51</sup>. Across the other countries too there is a sense that teachers are understood to represent their country and its government: they are not just nation-builders, but ambassadors of national goals and ideologies. In Ghana, teachers are members of the Ghana Education Service (GES), into the hands of which, the 'children of this country [have] been entrusted... this places members of the service... in a special position of responsibility which requires exceptionally high standards of behaviour and conduct' (DocG4/2008:4). Nigeria's National Policy of Education states that a key aim of teacher education is to 'enhance [teachers'] commitment to national goals' (DocN2/2004:39). More poetically, in South Africa educators are described as the 'midwives' of the nation (DocSA6/2003:22).

The notion of teachers as ambassadors of national ideologies is particularly evident in the Sudanese documents. When Omar al-Bashir's National Congress Party came to power in 1989 he announced that education should, at all levels, be based on Islamic values. Arabic became the sole medium of instruction and a new curriculum was designed that incorporated the ideological-religious principles of an Islamic state (Breidlid, 2005). Sudan is the only country studied to include religion in their EFA goals. The first of five 'pillars' on

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<sup>51</sup> In this case, the nation-building ideals of the African National Congress, South Africa's governing party since post-apartheid democracy in 1994.

which the 'purpose of education' rests and which constitute Sudan's plan for EFA is: 'The consolidation of the religious doctrine'. The third pillar is: 'Building up the sense of patriotism and loyalty' (DocSU2/1999:2). It is implied that teachers in Sudan are expected to facilitate these pillars: the fifth axis of the EFA plan is 'up-grading the teaching profession so that the teacher would become a national example from the moral, educational and behavioural point of view' (DocSU2/1999:2).

The intertwining of religion and education, and the role of teachers as ambassadors of this position, was also a theme in the narratives of the Sudanese officials:

'Teachers must acknowledge that we are a very religious people – this is very important. There are aspects in our national constitution about uniting people and protecting the religious ideals of the nation... building a united community at all levels... a teacher has to pass on these values to others.' (EOSU1/2009)

Teaching, it is implied, is a worthy and admirable profession and teachers are essential development partners held in great esteem by their employers, the government. This positive discourse around teachers and teaching is woven through all of the official data. However, most of this positive discourse is presented in idealistic and visionary terms: what teachers could or should be, rather than what they are perceived to be:

'The National Curriculum Statement envisions teachers who are qualified, competent, dedicated and caring... They see teachers as mediators of learning, interpreters and designers of Learning Programmes and materials, leaders, administrators and managers, scholars, researchers and lifelong learners,

community members, citizens and pastors, assessors and learning area/phase specialists.’ (DocSA3/2002:9)

‘Qualitative reform of Nigerian education cannot be attained without highly qualified, competent and motivated teachers to actualise the vision and goals of education for individual, community and national development.’ (DocN7/2008/iii)

That these are described as visions implies that most existing teachers are not perceived to be as qualified, dedicated, competent or motivated as desired. The visionary nature of the documents resonates with the theme of nostalgia that emerged from the interviews with the education officials. Their descriptions of a ‘good teacher’ were often couched in the past:

‘When I think of a good teacher, the sort of teacher I am struggling to produce, I remember the teachers who taught me at basic school, how dedicated they were, how they made us enjoy learning. We didn’t want to stay at home.’ (EOG1/2009)

‘We were brought up thinking that teachers were the true civil servant, the backbone of development in any community.’ (EON1/2007)

‘In Sudan, before, teaching was considered to be an excellent job because you were the cornerstone of a community. Teachers now, they’re not getting that. Teachers need to revisit these ideals.’ (EOSU2/2009)

These examples of idealised positive discourse around teachers, their conceptual role as loyal nation builders, visions regarding the potential of their work and fond memories of

how they used to be are at odds with how teachers are depicted more predominantly throughout the documents and interview data. Despite inspiring understandings of what teachers should be or could be, there is little acknowledgement that existing teachers come close to fulfilling this potential. For the most part teachers are depicted in a negative light, as the next section demonstrates.

### **4.3 Depictions of teachers: the ‘real’**

The literature reviewed in chapter 2 suggests that teachers tend to be portrayed as a homogenous group in policy and research. The analysis suggests that the official documents tend to portray teachers as two homogenous groups: ‘good’ teachers and ‘bad’ teachers. The extract below, from South Africa’s Plan of Action to Quality Education, epitomises this distinction:

‘We have educators whose accomplishments exceed even the high expectations placed on them by the system and the community. They are the heroes of our schooling system... Sadly we also have educators who not only fail to give their best in the classroom, but contravene school rules by arriving late at work in the morning and engaging in criminal acts such as improper relations with learners and sexual abuse. The harm that such behaviour inflicts on our schooling system, on the reputation of the teaching fraternity and on the next generation of South Africans is very high.’ (DocSA6/2003/5.3/23)

This focus on negative behaviour and the underperformance of teachers both pedagogically and professionally dominates the documents. In contrast with the idealised



notion of teachers as nation-builders, there is much in the documents that implies teachers are a threat to national development. This section focuses on how teachers are depicted across the official data. This is important in terms of answering the research questions because it gives an insight into the implied capabilities of teachers and into how educational governance operates in respect of these implied capabilities.

#### ***4.3.1 Concerns about quality***

In order to develop a more in-depth understanding of how teachers are depicted it is useful to better understand what is implied by teacher quality. The terms ‘quality’ and ‘poor quality’ are commonly used to describe teachers and their work, yet they tend to be used without explanation. Nigeria’s National Education Report (DocN7/2008:37), for example, cites the findings of a national sector analysis in which teacher quality was given a score of 1 out of 5, but does not explain how quality was interpreted or measured. The predominant implication across the data, however, is that teacher quality is interpreted in terms of pupil achievement:

‘[aim to]... improve the quality of... teachers and teaching [so that by] 2010 pupils achieve a pass rate of 80% in termly examinations in all subjects.’  
(DocN5/2006/25)

‘Improving all aspects of the quality of teaching... so that recognised and measurable learning outcomes are achieved by all, especially in literacy, numeracy and essential life skills.’ (DocG6/2002/3)

A key concern, evident in the data from all five countries, is that despite huge investments in education, pupils' results are still considered to be poor<sup>52</sup>. This is attributed to a range of factors such as the physical school environment (DocSU1/1999; DocG3/2002), poor school management (DocN4/2006:21), inappropriate, outdated or overloaded curricula (DocN5/2006:2), a lack of or insufficient learning resources and obsolete textbooks (DocK2/2004; DocN4/2006:20), large class sizes (DocSA6/2003; EOG1/2009) and pupil absence (DocSU1/2004). Nigeria's Education Sector Analysis (DocN4/2006:20) cites 'there is a chronic inadequacy of basic facilities to facilitate teaching and learning'. However, a predominant attribution of poor learning outcomes is to 'poor quality' teachers and teaching.

This attribution was especially strong in the interview data. Officials suggested that if teachers were better quality the impact of the other challenges that limit pupil achievement would be reduced:

'You know what the challenges are before you enter the profession. For example you know there is never going to be enough funding for books and things... so teachers must be cautious of this, and the learning materials? Improvise, you know?!' (EOG1/2009)

'There are challenges, sure, but low quality teachers exacerbate these challenges by not rising to them.' (EOK1/2009)

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<sup>52</sup> Fewer than half of grade 3 learners in South Africa pass Language and Numeracy tests (DocSA1/2010). Only half of primary school pupils in Sudan pass Mathematics (DocSU1/1999). Literacy and Numeracy test scores in Nigeria are 'well below the 40% mean' (DocN7/2008:36). Nigeria's review of teacher education curricula describes pupil outcomes as 'deplorable' (DocN9/2005:ix).

‘The challenges are there yes, but the bottom line is that teachers are supposed to teach learners. Whether you teach under the bushes, whether you teach in the farm schools, whether you teach in the homelands or whether you teach in town the bottom line is that a teacher must teach... So many of our teachers are not of the right calibre or quality and they do not get this.’ (EOSA1/2010)

Further analysis of ‘teacher quality’ across the documents suggests that ‘poor teacher quality’ is a more tangible phrase and can be interpreted in four ways.

The first relates to the understanding that teaching is a second choice, or last resort, profession for a significant proportion of teachers and does not attract ‘good quality graduates’ (DocG3/2002:10). The Nigerian Government’s Report on Teacher Education (DocN6/2002:vii) states ‘teacher education is currently the least favoured profession by applicants into Nigerian universities’. The Education Situation Analysis, published four years later suggests the same: ‘colleges of education take in students from the bottom of the list, i.e. those who cannot find a placement in any other institution end up on [education] courses’ (DocN4/2006:26). Kenya’s Education Policy Report (DocK2/2004:20) claims that many teachers took teaching as a ‘last and only available option... which leads to poor quality teachers’. Sudan’s National Report on education implies that less well-qualified students choose teaching as a career: ‘[we are focussed on...] upgrading the teaching profession so that [it] can attract the best elements to work in it’ (DocSU1/1999:1).

Data from the interviews showed that the officials also perceived a connection between the lack of desire to teach and poor quality teaching. A Nigerian official said that new recruits

to the profession tend to be those who have 'no other options' (EON1/2007). One Sudanese official – a former teacher – said:

'Before, only the crème de la crème could go to the higher teaching institute... now it is the last choice... if people are teachers because they can't find any other alternative, they are not going to be the best quality and they are not going to enjoy their work.' (EOSU2/2009)

The second understanding of poor teacher quality relates to teachers who do not hold the minimum qualification for teaching. The issue of teachers being unqualified or under-qualified is acknowledged particularly in discussions about teacher quality in the Nigerian and Sudanese documents. In 2008 over 50% of teachers employed in Nigeria's basic education system did not have the Nigeria Certificate of Education (NCE), which replaced the Certificate II as the minimum qualification in 1998 (DocN4/2006:26; DocN8/2008). Nigeria's Education Sector Analysis claims that 88,000 unqualified teachers are considered poor quality because they 'have insufficient academic qualifications to realistically be considered for upgrading' (DocN4/2006:26).

In 2004 only 10% of the 132,000 teachers in Sudan's basic education system had a bachelor's degree which replaced the Diploma in Education as the minimum qualification for teaching in 2000 (DocSU1/2004:16). Officially states are not supposed to employ teachers unless they have a BEd, or a degree and a teaching qualification, but the 'tens of thousands' of teachers with only a secondary school education means this policy is infeasible (EOSU2/2009:4). Frequently, in the Sudanese documents, teacher qualification and quality are presented as directly related, for example:

‘One of the most important problems facing basic education quality in Sudan is how to qualify teachers [...] it appears that a number of teachers working in the basic phase do not have sufficient technical qualifications that allow them to teach with the required competence.’ (DocSU1/1999:2)

However, a conflict was noted across the data, within countries and between the documents and the officials. While some drew a simplistic line between qualification and quality, others implied that that the pedagogical skills teachers develop through their training, and in particular their teaching practice, are a better reflection of teacher quality than the qualification they possess:

‘A major problem is the erroneous assumption made by the National Council on Education that a paper qualification rather than classroom performance is the defining characteristic of teacher quality.’ (DocN8/2008:24)

‘So you get the qualification and you can call yourself a teacher. But I don’t know why the government think it is so important that teachers have a degree, for me, I differ slightly from that point of view. If you have a lot of knowledge but don’t know how to teach, it’s useless... you need skills and knowledge together.’ (EOSU1/2009)

This conflict points to a third interpretation of poor teacher quality. Teachers are reported to lack pedagogical skills, subject knowledge and knowledge of the curriculum. This is often attributed to poor quality teacher training or where teachers were trained prior to changes in curricula. In South Africa and Sudan it is attributed to political shifts which have

rendered teaching out of step with current socio-political constitutions grounded in equality and Islam respectively. For example:

'...most primary teachers do not have specific primary teaching skills. Teaching consists of traditional methods of lecturing despite the fact that the curriculum suggests a more activity based approach... Courses focus on subject knowledge and theoretical knowledge... There is far too little practice teaching.'  
(DocN4/2006:26)

'The President's Education Initiative Research Project concluded that the most critical challenge for teacher education in South Africa was the limited conceptual knowledge of many teachers. This includes poor grasp of their subjects as evidenced by a range of factual errors made in content and concepts during lessons.'  
(DocSA10/2006:6-7)

Data from all five countries proudly highlights new developments in teacher education, for example the launch of the Open University of Sudan with its capacity for tens of thousands of in-service teachers a year and a strong focus on teaching practice. While the officials from Sudan were confident that recent changes to teacher education were developing teachers' practical skills and helping them to be more reflective, the officials from Nigeria expressed concern that the in-service NCE programme, offered by the National Teachers' Institute did not adequately prepare teachers:

'We are supposed to increase teacher numbers whenever there is a pupil increase but we have no teachers so we have to accept applications from untrained teachers and put them on 'on the job training' so they are working while studying...

we are facing serious problems here because the training just isn't in-depth enough for someone with no background in teaching.' (EON1/2007)

The other Nigerian official shared these views; he felt teachers were 'rushed through' the NCE programme: 'they are graduating before their time... they are not enlightened about teaching they just learn to be slaves to the curriculum' (EON2b/2011). Neither of these interviewees was confident that new developments in teacher education were having a positive effect on teacher quality.

The fourth interpretation relates to teacher commitment, motivation and behaviour. It is implied that some teachers are not devoted to their profession nor are they interested in pursuing further professional development or in setting a good example. This is presented as being to the detriment of themselves, their communities and their country. A key theme to emerge, especially from the South African documents, was teacher productivity:

'Recent research has shown that too often teachers reach the end of the year but have not completed the teaching programme for the year... Time is lost because teachers and learners arrive late, or leave early. Time is also lost during the school day when breaks are extended and teachers are not in class when they should be.'  
(DocSA1/2010:29)

'Low quality teaching is exacerbated by low teacher productivity. This has been cited as the main reason for South Africa's relatively poor performance.'  
(DocSA6/2003/5.1/18)

Concerns about teacher productivity are also evident in documents from other countries. Nigeria's National Report of Education, for example, highlights how many hours of timetabling are lost due to teacher absenteeism (DocN8/2008).

The interview data showed that poor commitment and motivation was a key concern of the education officials too. Most expressed sadness and bemusement at this. They felt they had become teachers when it was a highly respected profession and were passionate about the role teachers could play in society. That many of the teachers they now supervised, organised, taught and oversaw failed to share this sense of self-worth caused bewilderment. A Nigerian official said 'teachers have lost dedication because they lack interest in the young ones in their hearts' (EON2a/2007). The South African official cited a 'huge problem' with teacher commitment. 'They forget one thing,' he went on to say, 'and that is the reason they get this little bit of money is because they are doing a job and their job is to teach the learners. So stop talking about demoralisation and so on, just teach' (EOSA1/2010). The Ghanaian official expressed a similar view:

'A teacher should not complain, "I'm not getting enough so I won't do it, if you don't pay me I won't do it". When I was a headmaster I would ask teachers to do some extra work, like a competition or some sports activity, these things are part of the job, they are things teachers should love to do! But now they want to be paid! This is a big problem and it is shocking to me.' (EOG1/2009)



#### **4.4 Officially valued goals for teachers**

The purpose of the two previous sections was to provide a commentary on how teachers are portrayed in the official documents and through the views of the education officials. Overall the portrayal of teachers is generalised. Statistics represent national data and there is little nuance between how perceptions of teachers differ in terms of geography, gender, age or culture. There is also very little nuance between good teachers and bad teachers – they are presumed to be one or the other. While the pursuit of good quality teachers is a uniform goal, the documents and perspectives of the education officials suggest that – even within countries – a ‘good quality teacher’ is an elusive and ill-defined concept.

This section moves away from the language of quality and towards the language of value. This is important for two reasons. First because it is difficult to pursue the goal (or goals) of ‘quality teaching’ when the data offers inconsistent understandings of what this is. Secondly, while it is implied that an outcome of good quality teaching is increased pupil attainment the data also suggests that pupil attainment is not all that is valued. It is clear that teachers are expected to pursue and facilitate other goals, to occupy a range of roles and demonstrate specific types of behaviour and personal characteristics. The capability approach provides a way of exploring what is valued – and the pursuit of what is valued. Therefore, a more in-depth understanding of officially valued goals of teaching is necessary to evaluate teachers’ professional capabilities. These are presented in this section.

For clarity, what is valued has been organised into three categories: professional knowledge, professional practice and professional engagement. These headings are used

in the Professional Standards for Nigerian Teachers document to describe the 'essential elements of teaching' (DocN1/2008:3-4). These elements resonate across the data and provide a useful frame within which to present the findings.

#### **4.4.1 Professional knowledge**

This category of valued goals includes teachers' subject knowledge, their understandings around different teaching and learning strategies and when to use these effectively. It also incorporates teachers' knowledge of their pupils and the ways in which different children, or groups of children, learn.

##### *Subject knowledge*

In primary schools in all five countries studied, teachers tend to be class-teachers in the lower grades and subject teachers in the higher grades. However, at whichever level they teach both general and specialist subject knowledge is valued. In Nigeria teachers need:

'...general knowledge of all of the subjects that are taught at the primary schools, i.e. to be able to teach all primary school subjects... and specialised knowledge of two or three more subjects that could be taught beyond the primary level.'  
(DocN9/2005:98)

Being a specialist in a 'particular learning area, subject or phase' constitutes one of the seven key roles for teachers in South Africa (DocSA10/2006:5). Educators should 'have a well-developed understanding of the knowledge appropriate to the specialism' and be 'well-grounded in the knowledge, skills, values, principles, methods and procedures relevant to the discipline' (DocSA11/2000:1). Subject specialism is considered 'the

overarching role into which the other roles are integrated and in which competence is ultimately assessed' (DocSA13/2000:2). In Kenya teachers are assessed on whether they are qualified to teach the subject they are teaching (DocK2/2010) but are also expected to be competent in all core subjects (DocK4/2005).

Across all five countries a firm grounding in and 'sound critical understanding' (DocN1/2008:9/1.2) of curriculum content is highly valued. This also emerged from the interview data. A Ghanaian official claimed that teachers must always be 'ahead' in terms of what they know compared to what they are teaching, 'in case a bright pupil asks an advanced question' (EOG1/2009). A Kenyan official pointed to tensions between teachers' scientific and cultural knowledge as an impediment to good teaching: '...when they are not well-grounded in science themselves... they can be carried away by cultural beliefs that contradict what is in the curriculum' (EOK1/2009).

### *Language*

Teachers with additional language skills are highly valued, although in different ways across the five countries. Documents from South Africa place a strong emphasis on teachers cultivating learners' home languages: teachers are 'expected to be fully proficient in at least ONE official language and partly proficient (sufficient for purposes of ordinary classroom communication) in at least ONE other official language' (DocSA12/2000:1). They are expected to 'use the language of instruction appropriately to explain, describe and discuss key concepts...[and] use a second official language to explain, describe and discuss concepts in a conversational style' (DocSA13/2000:7).

The Sudanese documents state that while Arabic is the language of instruction 'at all levels of the education system', teachers also need to have a basic understanding of tribal

languages where appropriate (DocSU2/1999:2). The Nigerian Review of Teacher Education (DocN9/2005:37) states:

‘Teachers, especially in the lower classes, should be able to speak the major local languages so that he/she can use it/them to drive particular points home as briefly as possible without undermining English. The more bilingual a teacher is the better and more effective he/she becomes.’

The Nigerian Education Report also outlines plans to ‘reinforce teaching of French as a second official language’ (DocN7/2008:30).

#### *Knowledge about effective teaching*

The documents’ portrayal of what is valued in the actual act of teaching draw heavily on ideas around pedagogy and learning that conceptualise the teacher as a facilitator of learning rather than an imparter of knowledge, and the pupils as co-operatives in the learning process. Teachers in all five countries are expected to understand and effectively use a wide range of contemporary pedagogical approaches with their pupils.

One of the seven roles of teaching defined by South Africa’s Norms and Standards for Educators is ‘Learning Mediator’: ‘...the educator ‘will know about different approaches to teaching and learning... and how these may be used in ways which are appropriate to the learners and the context’ (DocSA11/2000:1). Teachers are expected to ‘use key teaching strategies such as higher level questioning, problem based tasks and projects, appropriate use of group work, whole class teaching and individual self-study’ (DocSA13/2000:7). The South African education official described how teacher education programmes were ‘trying

to produce a teacher that is going to be able to guide the learner to find information themselves' (EOSA1/2010).

Sudan's Report to UNESCO states that it is:

'...training teachers on untraditional ways of teaching in order to broaden the scope of basic education... to ensure that the teaching strategy is based on the participation of learners and that practical education... accounts for 25% of all teaching time.' (DocSU2/1999:4)

Nigeria's Professional Standards for Teachers document states that teachers should use 'a variety of teaching techniques and methods' (DocN1/2008:8/1.11) and the Development of Education Report points to the need for teachers to develop their teaching methodology 'in order to entrench relevance, functionality and learner-centred stimulation to promote successful learning' (DocN7/2008:26). A Nigerian official described how teachers are:

'...supposed to pursue many teaching methods so if you sense you are failing in one you can quickly switch to another one... but the best overall technique is supposed to be child-centred. You, the teacher, involve the children in the learning and allow them to do it by themselves... you just supervise, direct and control them, this is the best method.' (EON2a/2007)

A Kenyan official emphasised the shift towards 'active learner participation' and the role of the 'constructive teacher' in facilitating this (EOK1/2009). Key indicators in Kenya's Education Quality Index include 'pupil involvement', 'student participation' and a 'range of teaching and learning activities' (DocK1/2010:3,4,20). Also listed are 'paired or group work

to encourage active participation of students', 'cued elicitation for the drilling of facts, ideas and routines', 'open-ended questions', and 'student demonstrations' (DocK1/2010:22-23).

### *Understand pupil difference*

A strong theme to emerge from the data from all five countries was the value placed on fairness and non-discrimination towards pupils, requiring teachers to understand and adapt their teaching to incorporate pupil difference. This is expressed both in terms of pupils' academic strengths and weaknesses and also in terms of promoting equality between boys and girls, different ethnic and language groups and children with disabilities.

A highlighted aspect of teachers' professional knowledge in the Professional Standards for Nigerian teachers document is: 'Teachers know their students' and are 'aware of [their] social, cultural and religious backgrounds'. While they are expected to 'treat students equally' they are expected to demonstrate an 'understanding of pupils' individual differences through the use of individualised and group teaching techniques' (DocN1/2008:10/1.3). They are also expected to teach pupils to respect the differences of their classmates (DocN1/2008:10/1.3) and promote gender sensitive ideals in their classrooms by showing 'women in a positive light', 'inform, sensitise and dispel religious misconceptions and cultural inhibitions against girls' education in the North and boys' education in the South East' (DocN7/2008:26). Nigeria's Teacher Education Review states that 'the teacher should also be able to capitalise on pupils' diverse cultures in specific ways, as in class projects and assignments, cultural and creative arts activities, storytelling, class presentations and descriptions of cultural situations, customs and values' (DocN9/2005:37).

Sudan's MDG report (DocSU5/2004:59) highlights the importance of disability awareness among teachers. The same document highlights the need to train teachers to more effectively provide for excluded groups and sensitise communities to 'overcome cultural and other practices that hinder school enrolment and retention' (p.20). A description of the ideal curriculum in Sudan highlights the need for 'education programmes that show the positive aspects in every society group in order to support national unity' (DocSU2/1999:2) and that take 'into consideration... the importance of educating women' (p.1).

Equal inclusion also features in Kenya's Quality Education checklist (DocK1/2010:22). Teachers are expected to know and use student names and 'encourage equal participation of male and female students' and be able to identify students with special educational needs and ensure these are 'included in teacher questioning' (p.23).

Within the role of 'Learning Mediator' teachers in South Africa are expected to show 'recognition of and respect for the differences of others', 'communicate effectively' including the use of sign language where appropriate (DocSA11/2000:7). Understanding pupil difference is also incorporated into another of the seven roles: as an 'Interpreter and designer of learning programmes and materials' educators are expected to design programmes that are 'sensitive to the diverse needs of learners, including those with barriers to learning [and] construct learning environments that are appropriately contextualised and inspirational' (DocSA11/2000:11). Teachers are expected not only to accept and deal with differences among their pupils but actively promote understanding and tolerance in their classrooms by 'creating a learning environment in which critical and creative thinking is encouraged [and where] learners challenge stereotypes about language, race, gender, ethnicity, geographic location and culture' (DocSA13/2000:7).

#### **4.4.2 Professional practice**

This category of valued aspects of teaching focuses on what teachers do. It includes how they convert their knowledge into teaching through the use of structures and objects, for example planning and assessment, classroom arrangement and the use of teaching resources.

##### *Planning*

Teachers are expected to demonstrate that lessons are planned in advance. Drawing on their knowledge and understanding of the curriculum they are expected to 'prepare relevant and adequate teaching notes for [their] work' (DocG4/2008:7). A lesson plan, with a time-line, is a key criterion in Kenya's Quality Education Index (DocK1/2010:21). Planning emerged as a strong theme in the Nigerian documents (DocN1/2008; DocN9/2005) and interview data. A Nigerian official defined it as the 'key factor in a good lesson' (EON2b/2011).

South Africa's Norms and Standards policy expects teachers to 'understand and interpret provided learning programmes..., identify the requirements for a specific context of learning' (DocSA11/2000:1) and be adept at 'selecting, sequencing and pacing content in a manner appropriate to the phase/subject/learning area... and the needs of the learners' (DocSA13/2000:13). It also expects teachers to draw on the curriculum in order to create their own 'original learning programmes so that they meet the desired outcomes and are appropriate for the context in which they occur' (DocSA13/2000:8). Teachers are expected to organise their classroom timetable so that appropriate time is given to core curriculum subjects (DocG3/2003) without neglecting other subjects (DocK1/2010), ensure that time in the lesson is appropriately managed, that the learning objectives are clearly stated



(DocK1/2010) and set an 'adequate amount of written and practical exercises' in relation to stated objectives (DocG4/2008:7).

### *Classroom arrangement*

Teachers in Kenya should arrange the classroom to 'facilitate learning of all students' (DocK1/2010:22). Kenya's Quality Education Index assesses the condition of the classroom including the lay-out of desks and seats and the presence of classroom displays (p.15 and p.21). Teachers in Nigeria are expected to 'manage the physical space of their classroom' to 'create and maintain safe and challenging learning environments' (DocN1/2008:4-5). Teachers in South Africa are expected to 'construct learning environments that are appropriately contextualised and inspirational (DocSA/11/2000:1) and 'understand various approaches to the management of classroom with particular emphasis on large, under-resourced and diverse classrooms' (DocSA13/2000:10).

### *Assessment and feedback*

Fair and accurate assessment of pupil progress – considered an 'essential feature of the teaching and learning process' (DocSA11/2000:2) - is highly valued across all five countries. A teacher's assessment procedures constitute a key indicator of quality in Kenya (DocK1/2010:4, 15, 20) and an 'assessment specialist' is one of the seven key roles outlined in South Africa's Norms and Standards policy (DocSA11/2000:2; DocSA10/2006). Teachers are expected to design and manage both formative and summative assessment schemes (DocSA11/2000) that comprehensively assess pupil knowledge and skills (DocSU2/1999:4), judge 'learners' competence and performance in ways that are fair, valid and reliable' (DocSA13/2000:12) and meet the requirements of the accrediting bodies (DocSA11/2000:2). Teachers' ability to use assessment schemes to improve their teaching is a valued skill as they are expected to systematically manage and

store 'detailed and diagnostic' records of their learners' progress and interpret these results in order to improve their learning programmes (DocSA11/2000:2; DocSA13/2000). In Nigeria teachers are expected to 'monitor student engagement in learning and maintain records of their learning progress' (DocN1/2008:5).

Teacher feedback to pupils is also valued across all five countries and, in particular, feedback that is regular (DocN7/2008), 'prompt and carefully judged' (DocG4/2008:7), 'sensitive and educationally helpful' (DocSA13/2000:13) and 'non-derogatory' (DocG4/2008:7).

#### *Use of learning aids and resources*

The use of learning aids and resources is highly valued in all five countries. South Africa's Plan of Action to EFA claims that 'educators without adequate learner support materials cannot teach effectively' (DocSA6/2003:7) and in Kenya, 'instructional materials' are considered a key indicator of quality (DocK1/2010:4, 20). As an 'interpreter and designer of learning programmes and materials' South African teachers are expected to 'select and prepare suitable textual and visual resources for learning' (DocSA11/2000:1). They are also expected to:

'...use media and everyday resources appropriately in teaching including judicious use of common teaching resources like text books, chalk boards and charts and other useful media like overhead projectors, computers, video and audio and popular media resources as well as other artefacts from every day life.'  
(DocSA13/2000:7)

While most documents tend to emphasise teachers' skills in selecting appropriate teaching resources, Nigeria's Development of Education report and South Africa's Norms and Standards policy state that teachers should be assessed not only on how they use learning resources, but also how they are able to design and improvise them themselves (DocN7/2008; DocSA11/2000). The interview data resonated with this perspective and officials presented a more realistic awareness of the scarcity of resources. Valued goals in this area, therefore, focus on resource creation as well as use:

'One thing I know is that we are never going to get enough funding. Especially in a country like this, there are so many demands on the government budget and it is always stressed. So teachers must be cautious of this. Be innovative! It is not always that you have to buy everything for teaching, I'm talking about teaching and learning materials, there are so many ways you can improvise. And it takes someone who loves teaching to do that.' (EOG1/2009)

'Definitely for a successful lesson, the teacher must provide the teaching aids. Because there is one adage that says: What I hear I forget. What I see I remember. What I taught, I understand. So that is why it is good for any teacher, don't rely on your voice, to make and use teaching aids so that the lesson will be real and practical.' (EON2a/2007)

Computer literacy is an increasingly valued skill across all five countries. South Africa's Norms and Standards for Educators policy states that teachers should be able to use 'a common word processing programme for developing basic materials' (DocSA13/2000:9) and understand how to 'access and use common information sources like libraries, community resources and computer information systems like the internet' (p.12). Kenyan

teachers are expected to be 'deeply founded in... information technology' (DocK2/2004:21).

Where computers and the internet are less available, computer literacy for teachers is seen as a visionary, but equally valuable goal:

'We see schools where classrooms are conducive to learning... with access to electricity on a 24 hour basis. The teachers are well trained using state of the art instructional materials. All subjects have an ICT component with every Nigerian child and teacher having access to a computer.' (DocN3/2006/6)

'[We aim to]... provide access to the internet... as a basic part of the instructional environment.' (DocG6/2002:25)

'[We plan for]... the introduction of new technologies in teachers' training such as using fiber-optic networks [to] let teachers study in their places of work.' (DocSU2/1999:4)

#### **4.4.3 Professional engagement**

'You see, teaching, it's not just about knowing things, or knowing how to plan, or the strategies, these are important but if a teacher does not want to be a teacher... if they do not have it in their hearts, in their core, I think it is hard to be a good teacher.' (EON2b/2011)

This category of valued goals in teachers' work considers their behaviour in classrooms, schools and communities. It includes enthusiasm for, engagement with and management of their work and their professional development as well as the extent to which they promote education and are role models in society. This is the category for which most valued goals were identified in the analysis.

#### *Loyalty to the government and national constitution*

This chapter has shown that teachers are expected to be ambassadors of national goals and that loyalty to the government is highly valued. Documents from all five countries go into extensive detail about how teachers are expected to be well-versed in and committed to the national constitution and government ideals (DocN2/2004; DocN7/2008). In South Africa educators should be 'well versed in matters of human rights' (DocSA6/2003:11) and the environment (DocSA13/2000) as 'contained in the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996' and actively promote these in their schools (DocSA8/1999:11). South African educators are also expected to understand 'sociological, philosophical, psychological, historical, political and economic explanations of key concepts of education with particular reference to... a diverse and developing country like South Africa' (DocSA13/2000:8) and ensure their teaching is culturally relevant and has socio-political significance (*ibid*). In Nigeria too, teachers are not just expected to know about national goals or the content of national policies, they are also expected to demonstrate a critical understanding of them by showing commitment to them in their work, actively promoting them in their communities, enhancing community commitment to them and ensuring they are incorporated into all of their lesson objectives (DocN1/2008; DocN2/2004; DocN9/2005).

The Sudanese documents focus on adherence to the five pillars of education and the 152 values of the basic phase curricula – outlined in Sudan’s National Education Policy (DocSU2/1999:1) – that intend to build up a sense of patriotism and loyalty in students, encourage them to trust in God, to protect the environment and develop their skills in the ‘service of good, truth and righteousness’. The curriculum is also designed to ‘steer’ students ‘away from the influence of the Occident’ and enhance their connection with the ‘roots of religion and national values’.

#### *Loyalty to the teaching profession*

Teachers are also expected to be loyal to their employers in order to promote integrity of the teaching profession (DocN1/2008; DocSA6/2003). In Ghana’s Teachers’ Code of Conduct document there are several references to teachers’ expected loyalty to national education policies and obedience in terms of these:

‘A teacher shall not fail to carry out his or her work... in a manner determined by the employer.’ (DocG4/2008:7)

‘No teacher shall in the course of his/her duties disobey, disregard or wilfully default in carrying out any lawful instruction, reasonable order given by any person, committee or Board having authority to give such an order or instruction.’ (DocG4/2008:12)

A key aspect of this theme is posting. The data from all five countries suggests teachers have little say over their place of employment and little leverage to refuse postings. For example:

‘A condition of employment is readiness to serve anywhere in Kenya...The Commission shall have the discretion to transfer a teacher at any time even when such a teacher has not applied for transfer.’ (DocK3/2005:46, 30-31)

‘No teacher shall refuse to accept posting... A teacher shall not refuse to go on transfer... on disciplinary grounds.’ (DocG4/2008:11)

### *Legitimacy and professional development*

There is a strong emphasis across documents from all five countries that the official recognition of teachers is highly valued. This is understood in terms of a situation where all practising teachers have undergone appropriate training in order to achieve the minimum qualification to teach at the basic level and are officially registered as government employees. Kenya’s Quality Index insists teachers are ‘appropriately qualified to teach their curriculum subjects’ (DocK1/2010/14). A goal outlined in Nigeria’s National Education report (DocN7/2008:20) is that ‘all teachers in education institutions shall be professionally trained and formally registered to teach’. The Sudanese documents define a legitimate teacher as one that is fully qualified (DocSU2/1999; DocSU5/2004). The definition of a teacher in Kenya is ‘a person who has fulfilled the requirements as to qualifications for the purpose of the Teachers’ Service Commission Act... [and who is] registered by the Commission’ (DocK3/2005:2).

After registration the first two years of a Kenyan teachers’ career are spent under probation. In South Africa, registration with the South African Council for Educators (SACE) – the legitimisation of a teacher – is not permanent and is dependent on teachers pursuing professional development points. Ghana’s Code of Conduct for Teachers, too, emphasises that teachers need to constantly prove that they deserve the status of a

teacher – and therefore membership of the GES – to avoid retraction of their teaching licence (DocG4/2008).

The professional development of teachers is highly valued across all five countries and teachers who pursue their own professional development are held in particularly high esteem. Being a ‘scholar, researcher and life-long learner’ is one of the seven key roles of South African teachers (DocSA10/2006; DocSA11/2000; DocSA12/2000; DocSA13/2000). It is portrayed as the responsibility of national and provincial education departments to ‘provide an enabling environment for such preparation and development of teachers’ but the responsibility of teachers themselves to ‘take charge of their self-development by identifying the areas in which they wish to grow professionally, and to use all opportunities made available to them for this purpose’. While education departments fund ‘compulsory’ professional development activities teachers are expected to fund (or seek bursaries for) ‘self-selected’ activities: teachers who invest their own money in their professional development in order to ‘maintain their professional standing’ are especially highly valued (DocSA10/2006:20).

In Nigeria teachers are expected to ‘identify their own professional learning needs and plan for and engage in professional development activities’ (DocN1/2008/14/3.1:3.1c). Professional development is noted as a key indicator of quality in Kenya and teachers are assessed on the amount of in-service training they have attended in the last three years (DocK1/2010). In Sudan professional development – specifically obtaining a BEd – is highly valued but it is implied that it is the government’s responsibility to upgrade teachers rather than the teachers’ responsibility to seek out further training (DocSU2/1999).



### *Personal characteristics and teacher behaviour*

The data implies that there is a specific type of person that ideally becomes a teacher and that there are specific characteristics of teachers that are especially valued. Most importantly, it appears, is the notion of vocation. Teaching is seen as a 'calling' (DocSA10/2006:17). Teachers who are committed to this calling, have a cheerful disposition and are 'enthusiastic' about the work they do in the classroom are especially highly valued. A key criterion for Kenyan teachers is the exhibition of 'personal enthusiasm' (DocK1/2010:22). The officials were particularly insistent about the importance of vocation:

'Good teachers feel that they are giving something good to the nation, they treasure their role and they feel important... A teacher should, before they even enter training college, say "this is the job I want to do I want to be a contributor to someone's progress"... We have to have teachers who believe that they are teachers and who believe in what teachers can do.' (EOG1/2009)

'My opinion is that if you say you are coming to the teaching profession to get material things definitely you are deceiving yourself and wasting your time. But if you are coming because of the love you have in your heart for these young ones, definitely you are going to achieve that.' (EON2a/2007)

Teachers are also expected to be creative, inquisitive and reflective (DocN7/2008:20; DocSU2/1999:4; DocSA13/2000:13) as well as organised, time-efficient and punctual (DocK1/2010:22; DocN7/2008:20) and adaptable. Teachers are valued who can adapt to different classroom situations, for example the different needs of different learners, but

who are also adaptable in terms of the bigger picture of education and development and can 'adapt their work within the changing needs of society' (DocN7/2008:20).

In South Africa adaptability is linked with reflection which is one of the three key components of the Norms and Standards for Educators policy (DocSA12/2000; DocSA13/2000). The competences listed in the policy 'will be performed in ways which... demonstrate responsiveness to changing circumstances and needs' (DocSA12/2000:1) and educators will demonstrate the ability 'in an authentic context to consider a range of possibilities for action [and] make considered decisions about which possibility to follow' (DocSA13/2000:2). Teachers are expected to be constantly 'identifying and critically evaluating what counts as undisputed knowledge, necessary skills [and] important values' (DocSA13/2000:13), and 'critically evaluating different programmes in real contexts and/or through case studies both in terms of their educational validity as well as their socio-political significance' (DocSA13/2000:9). Despite this there is a clear message that there should be limits to this critical reflection and that it should not challenge the policy line. As outlined above, loyalty to the government and obedience and adherence to the rules and regulations of education policy is a highly valued characteristic of teachers in all five countries.

Teacher behaviour is a common theme across all of the data. It is suggested that teachers' behaviours outside the classroom are as important as those inside – that a teacher should be a role model in all aspects of their life. Ghana's Code of Conduct for Teachers (DocG4/2008:14) claims that on becoming a member of the GES a teacher 'accepts this responsibility and pledges to seek at all times to maintain the highest standard of... good behaviour' and shall not 'engage in any act that brings the employer into disrepute'. Teachers are reported to be 'in a special position of responsibility which requires

exceptionally high standard of behaviour and conduct' (DocG4/2008:4). Kenya's Code of Regulations for Teachers states that 'a teacher shall be required at all times to perform his/her duties and to conduct himself/herself in a manner that befits a responsible and professional teacher, at the place of work and in his/her relationship with fellow teachers, pupils and members of the public' (DocK3/2005:190). Similarly:

'The educator will practise and promote a critical, committed and ethical attitude towards developing a sense of respect and responsibility towards others. The educator will uphold the constitution and promote democratic values and practices in schools and society.' (DocSA12/2000:18).

This latter document also states that teachers should '[demonstrate] an interest in, appreciation and understanding of current affairs, various kinds of arts, culture and political events' (p.12).

The way teachers dress and speak appears to be especially important. In Ghana teachers must 'show a high degree of decency in speech and mannerism' and 'shall in particular dress to portray the dignity of the profession' (DocG4/2008:10). The official from Ghana also emphasised that teachers need to 'dress like they are professionals' and said that those who do not, risk being disrespected by the community (EOG1/2009). In Kenya teachers are expected to 'dress in a manner that reflects credit to the teaching profession and sets a good example to their pupils. They will therefore ensure that their clothes present a respectable, clean and neat appearance' (DocK3/2005:35).

Other documents highlight that teachers must live a 'moral and ethical life' (DocSA10/2006:5). Teachers can be removed from the register in Kenya if they are

considered not to be of 'good moral character' or are 'engaged in any activities which, in the opinion of the commission are prejudicial to peace, good order or good governance' (DocK3/2005:190). Teachers are warned against experiencing 'financial embarrassment' which, it is claimed, 'impairs the efficiency of a teacher' and may result in disciplinary proceedings' (DocK3/2005:34). Ghanaian teachers are forbidden from borrowing from or lending money to another teacher or taking part in collecting debts on behalf of a money lender (DocG4/2008:14).

Within the work place teachers should refrain from examination malpractice and the forging or falsification of any document with the purpose of misleading their employers (DocN7/2008:26; DocG4/2008:7; DocK3/2005). The Ghanaian official expressed sadness at the 'routine abuse' by teachers of the continuous assessment component of exams. 'The teacher is the one that is best placed to mark pupils, but we mark them externally because there is more integrity.' (DocG1/2009).

Discipline should be constructive and non-violent (DocN7/2008). Ghana's code of conduct prohibits teachers from sending children out of class for absenteeism or lateness, from 'threaten[ing] with cruel or degrading punishment' and hurting children and depriving pupils of their right to participate in sports or other leisure activities (DocG4/2004:9). Teachers should not physically, sexually or psychologically abuse pupils (DocSA8/1999; DocN7/2008; DocG4/2008) nor should they 'directly or indirectly do anything that may constitute sexual harassment of a pupil/student' (DocG4/2008:9), have sexual relations with students (DocSA8/1999:23) or 'compel any female or male pupil/student in his or her school or in any educational institution to marry him or her with or without the consent of the child's parents' (DocG4/2008:9). In addition, any teacher who has carnal knowledge of

any female or male pupil/student of any age with or without his or her consent shall be found guilty of professional misconduct' (*ibid*).

Teachers are forbidden from using illegal drugs at the workplace or involving students in any way with the purchase or use of illegal drugs. Pornography, with the intention of 'morally corrupting' pupils is also banned from teachers' possession during class hours. Drinking alcohol is forbidden while on duty and 'habitual drunkenness', inside or outside school, is considered to bring the profession into disrepute (DocG4/2008/12; DocSA8/1999).

They are forbidden from engaging in any 'gainful economic activity at the workplace' (DodG4/2008:11) and from performing any other unofficial duties or activities during school hours (p.8), including engaging in private or personal conversations. The officials were all critical of teachers who did another job outside school: 'so they will be going out in the morning to do that job, they exhaust all their energy, then by 12 o'clock they are too tired to teach' (EON2b/2011). In a rare example of a document engaging with teachers' personal lives, Ghanaian teachers are also requested not to bring their own babies or young children to work with them without permission. If permission is granted they must be placed at a location where the noise or cry will not interfere with learning and pupils shall not be used as baby sitters (DocG4/2008:12).

The data focuses on the role of teachers and money collection from different perspectives. Ghanaian and Kenyan documents prohibit the misappropriation of public funds, the collection of fees or levies from communities and accepting bribes or benefits in return for normal duties (DocG4/2008:15; Dock3/2005). In Sudan, however, more than 50% of the basic education budget is funded by communities and voluntary donations. A key aspect of

a teachers' role is to promote this 'unique phenomenon' by collecting 'financial and in specie donations from the local society, charitable and commercial institutions and organisations... to rehabilitate and support school services' (DocSU2/1999:4).

Teachers are warned against political involvement such as strikes, riots, demonstrations, or other activities that are politically controversial (DocN7/2008; DocSA10/2006). Ghanaian teachers who wish to run for public office must distance themselves from the GES and 'apply to the director general for a leave of absence without pay.' They are also forbidden from editing or managing a newspaper or magazine and can only give interviews to the press with formal permission from their District Education Officer. (DocG4/2008:14). Kenyan teachers seeking political office must also resign from teaching. More generally they are expected to:

'...remain aloof from active participation in politics. He/she should restrict his/her discussions to subjects of general interest and should not discuss government affairs, which fall directly within his/her sphere. This does not prohibit a teacher from holding his/her own personal views on political matters but it does prohibit him/her from active participation in political meetings.' (DocK3/2005:33-34)

While teachers in Sudan are expected to promote their faith to their pupils, teachers in the other countries are actively warned not to do this: 'Teachers shall not use their positions to spread their political, religious or other ideologies among pupils/students' (DocG4/2008:10). However, teachers are expected to collaborate with faith-based organisations to garner their support towards the holistic development of schools and students, while ensuring these organisations do not impose the interests of their denomination on the pupils (DocG6/2002:22).

It is emphasised that teachers should turn up for school regularly. Kenya's Education Quality Index, for example, uses 'the overall attendance and punctuality of staff' as a key indicator of teacher quality (DocK1/2010:14) and teacher attendance is also used as a measure for overall school quality (p.3). Ghana's National Plan to EFA aims to ensure 90% attendance of teachers in basic schools by 2015 (DocG6/2002:16) and the Teachers' Code of Conduct states that: 'No teacher may leave the school during school hours without the permission of the head' (DocG4/2008:11). This document goes further than the others analysed in terms of controlling teachers' time and movement, claiming 'no teacher shall leave Ghana without written permission from the Director-General of the GES' (*ibid*).

#### *Pastoral care*

The pastoral role of teachers is highly valued in all five countries. Teachers are expected to provide pupils with social skills and support for their future. South Africa's Draft Action Plan to 2014 claims that 'though the main responsibility of the school must be good teaching and learning, there are things schools can do to ensure that learners are healthy and have access to government programmes aimed at reducing poverty' (DocSA1/2010:14). Teachers are expected to protect their learners from harm both inside and outside of school: 'Educators have a duty of care for and protect learners from violence because of their in loco parentis status' (DocSA2/2003:5). The protection of students features heavily in Ghana's Code of Conduct for teachers. Failure to intervene in and report the physical, psychological or sexual abuse of a pupil is considered to be a major act of misconduct (DocG4/2008:9). In Kenya teachers who deal 'promptly and effectively with undesirable behaviour' are highly valued and teachers are rated on how well they deal with bullying and harassment of pupils (DocK1/2010:15).

Teachers are also expected to provide guidance and counselling to pupils in terms of relationships, sexual health, healthy lifestyle, political attitudes, violence, drugs, study possibilities and career guidance (DocK1/2010:4; DocG6/2002:18; DocSU2/1999; DocSA13/2000:10) and 'empower learners to deal with these situations' (DocSA8/1999:22). Pastoral care of pupils in Kenya includes their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of as well as care, welfare and support and counselling about sexual and other health matters, career guidance, behaviour change, drug use and abuse, peace and harmony' (DocK1/2010:4). Nigeria's Development of Education report also includes road safety awareness (DocN7/2008) and Sudan's National Education report highlights an intervention in which basic education teachers are trained to counsel on nutrition care and agriculture (DocSU2/1999). Ghana's Code of Conduct for Teachers states that 'the teacher shall advise against early marriage and support children continuing their education' (DocG4/2008:9). South Africa's HIV/AIDS and education policy states that all learners should be taught first aid and, significantly, claims that 'educators have a particular duty to ensure that the rights and dignity of all learners, students and educators are respected and protected' and should counsel and/or tutor learners in need of assistance with social problems (DocSA13/2000)<sup>53</sup>.

### *Relationships*

The development of relationships, both inside and outside school is highly valued in all five countries. Kenya's Education Quality Index assesses how often PTA meetings are held and how frequently teachers meet with parents to discuss pupils' work. A further criterion assesses the extent of community involvement in the school (DocK1/2010). In Ghana teachers are expected to communicate regularly with the community, including providing

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<sup>53</sup> Documents from South Africa and Ghana in particular devote considerable space to teachers' responses to HIV/AIDS in schools and communities (DocSA8/1999; DocSA11/2000; DocSA13/2000; DocG3/2003; DocG4/2008).



them with feedback on the outcomes of all classroom tests (DocG6/2002:16). In South Africa teachers are expected to communicate with parents about their children's progress while being careful to explain 'descriptive and diagnostic reporting' in ways that can be understood by illiterate parents (DocSA13/2000:13). Sudan's National Report on Education claims teachers must link schools with society (DocSU2/1999) and Nigeria's National Education Report claims that a role of teachers is to 'fit into the social life of the community and the society at large and enhance their commitment to national goals' (DocN7/2008:20).

All five countries expect teachers to be known to the communities they work in, communicate regularly with them about pupil progress, include them in decisions made about the school and facilitate community capacity building. A community and citizen role is one of the seven key roles outlined by South Africa's Norms and Standards for Educators policy where teachers are expected to 'develop supportive relations with parents and other key persons and organisations based on a critical understanding of community and environmental development issues' (DocSA11/2000:1; DocSA10/2006). Teachers are also expected to facilitate community involvement in schools including seeking out professional and community support services and using their expertise (DocSA13/2000:10) to benefit schools:

'For me, when you choose to be a teacher you must know that this is your responsibility. So it is obvious that you don't just become a teacher to teach the kids in the schools, in the rural area, you wouldn't become a teacher if you just wanted to teach the kids in the schools. In the rural area, the teacher, to be a proper teacher you have to know that as a teacher you are not just going to help the kids in the classroom, you have to help the community.' (EOSU4/2009)

The relationships that teachers have with their colleagues is also a valued aspect of their work; collegiality is seen as a way of scaffolding the professional development of other educators in the school as well as creating a harmonious and democratic school environment. This is particularly apparent in the documents from South Africa. Educators are expected to work 'with other practitioners in team-teaching and participative decision making' (DocSA13/2000:9) and operate 'as a mentor... to student educators and colleagues' (DocSA13/2000:11). In Kenya regular staff meetings are marked as a key indicator of quality (DocK1/2010:3) and in Sudan participation in PTA meetings is portrayed as a positive activity for teachers (DocSU5/2004:59).

#### *Extra-curricular activities*

As part of being an active member of their profession teachers are expected, in all five countries, to involve themselves in other aspects of school life. One of the seven key roles in South Africa is that of a 'leader, administrator and manager'. Teachers are expected to 'participate in school decision-making structures' (DocSA/11/2000:1; DocSA10/2006). In a report to UNESCO the Sudanese government describes how it is concerned with 'expanding teachers' academic opportunities in order to head educational tasks in the field of curricula, training, guidance, assessment and school administration' (DocSU2/1999:1).

Involvement in pupils' extra-curricular activities appears to be highly valued. This forms part of Ghana's Teachers' Code of Conduct – failure to do so counts as a minor misconduct (DocG4/2008). In Kenya, teachers' involvement in co-curricular activities is a criteria on the school quality checklist (DocK1/2010:15) and the Kenyan Code of Regulations for teachers states that teachers should carry out 'any other duties assigned to them as part of the normal school regime including participation in school co-curricular

activities' (DocK3/2005:30). South Africa's Norms and Standards policy goes one step further claiming that good teachers not only participate in these activities but are actively involved organising and planning an extra-mural programme including sport, artistic and cultural activities that are relevant to the lives of learners (DocSA13/2000).

#### **4.5 Official professional capabilities and functionings for teachers**

Section 4.4 showed what is valued in teachers' work from official perspectives. Despite social, cultural, historical and political differences between the five countries, valued goals of teaching were largely consistent. Using the framework outlined in chapter 3 these goals have been composed into a list of valued beings and doings for teachers – official professional functionings. The functionings were then clustered into groups. Each group represents an official professional capability for teachers, that is, a substantive freedom that they are expected to be able to pursue in their work. Official professional capabilities and functionings for teachers are presented in table 4.1 and represent the answer to the first research question.

<b>Official Capabilities</b>	<b>Official Functionings</b>
Recognition	<i>Achieve the minimum qualification for teaching in their country</i>
	<i>Register as a teacher and...</i>
	<i>...maintain registered status</i>
Loyalty	<i>Be well-versed in the national constitution</i>
	<i>Promote the national constitution as good and right</i>
	<i>Be familiar with the structure of the education system</i>
	<i>Be up-to-date with education policies</i>
	<i>Understand their role in relation to national development</i>
	<i>Promote the importance of education in and outside school</i>
Respect	<i>Accept postings or relocations</i>
	<i>Be treated as a dignified professional and feel valued and respected by their: pupils,</i>
	<i>colleagues,</i>
	<i>local community,</i>
	<i>education officials,</i>
Vocation	<i>media,</i>
	<i>and national government</i>
	<i>Feel that teaching is a calling</i>
	<i>Be cheerful and enthusiastic about their role</i>
Reflection and professional development	<i>Feel passionate about education and confident in their ability to deliver it</i>
	<i>Be inquisitive and open to new ideas</i>
	<i>Reflect on the effectiveness of their teaching and the extent to which learning objectives are achieved</i>
	<i>Reflect on the curriculum and determine how best to deliver it to their pupils</i>
Subject knowledge	<i>Take charge of their own professional development by identifying additional learning needs</i>
	<i>Address these needs by pursuing professional development</i>
	<i>Have a good knowledge of all subjects</i>
Language and communication	<i>Specialise in one or two subjects and have knowledge in these that extends beyond primary level</i>
	<i>Have a sound understanding of the curriculum</i>
	<i>Be fluent in the language of instruction</i>
	<i>Cultivate pupils' home languages</i>
Personal management	<i>Speak additional languages</i>
	<i>Understand when it is appropriate to use different languages in teaching to enhance understanding without undermining the official language of instruction</i>
	<i>Be at school during contracted hours</i>
	<i>Consistently produce detailed lesson plans...</i>
	<i>...and adhere to these in their teaching</i>
	<i>Establish learning objectives drawn from the curriculum) for each lesson/week/term</i>
Pedagogy and resources	<i>Ensure personal activities do not interfere with school work</i>
	<i>Arrange their classroom in a way that is safe and that promotes learning</i>
	<i>Be familiar with a range of teaching methods and approaches...</i>
	<i>and be able to use these appropriately</i>
	<i>Facilitate a child-centred learning environment</i>
	<i>Select appropriate learning resources</i>
	<i>Create and develop learning resources where necessary</i>

	<i>Use a computer as a teaching resource</i>
Assessment and feedback	<i>Understand the importance of regular assessment</i>
	<i>Understand the difference between formative and summative assessment schemes and...</i>
	<i>apply these appropriately</i>
	<i>Keep accurate records of pupil learning and achievement</i>
	<i>Provide accurate and sensitive feedback to pupils</i>
	<i>Communicate pupil progress to parents</i>
Pupil respect	<i>Know all pupils by name</i>
	<i>Be familiar with pupils' backgrounds</i>
	<i>Treat pupils equally and promote equality between pupils</i>
	<i>Promote the diversity of cultures in the classroom</i>
	<i>Understand individual learning needs and adapt teaching to meet individual needs</i>
	<i>Discipline pupils without resorting to violence or cruel or threatening behaviour</i>
Pastoral care	<i>Provide counselling to pupils in terms of...</i>
	<i>relationships,</i>
	<i>sexual health,</i>
	<i>HIV/AIDS,</i>
	<i>healthy lifestyles,</i>
	<i>political attitudes,</i>
	<i>violence,</i>
	<i>study possibilities,</i>
	<i>career guidance.</i>
<i>Empower pupils to deal with these situations</i>	
<i>Counsel students against early marriage or dropping out and encourage them to continue their education</i>	
Relationships	<i>Encourage and attend staff meetings</i>
	<i>Participate in school decision making</i>
	<i>Be involved in extra-curricular activities</i>
	<i>Encourage and attend PTA meetings</i>
	<i>Meet with parents regularly to discuss pupils' work and provide regular feedback on pupil progress</i>
	<i>Develop appropriate communication channels for illiterate parents</i>
	<i>Play an active role in community life</i>
	<i>Engage in local development issues</i>
	<i>Promote community commitment to national goals</i>
Behaviour	<i>Dress modestly and appropriately</i>
	<i>Be punctual</i>
	<i>Live a moral and ethical life</i>
	<i>Refrain from substance abuse</i>
	<i>Refrain from drunkenness</i>
	<i>Avoid financial embarrassment</i>
	<i>Refrain from fraudulent activities</i>
	<i>Refrain from any activity that may impact negatively on teaching</i>
	<i>Suppress political views in public</i>
	<i>Do not engage in or facilitate any behaviour that constitutes sexual or physical abuse of pupils</i>

**Table 4.1 Official professional capabilities and functionings for teachers**

#### **4.6 Official professional capabilities and functionings: national and international influences**

The previous two sections answered the research question about what is valued in teachers' work from official perspectives. This section looks across these capabilities and functionings to make sense of why they are valued. Just as Sen (2009) highlights the importance of situating people's values in the context of their social relations, and the social influences that operate on them, it is important to situate the official data in the contexts in which it was produced. Making visible the social influences that operate on its production helps to understand why the official context has 'reason to value' what it does and to justify the reasons why these values are genuinely what is understood to be 'good' (Sen, 1999:19).

First it is important to acknowledge that policy documents tend to be 'general statements of intention' and 'do not serve as a guarantee of implementation or action, even where they use progressive terminology and promise radical change' (Potter and Subrahmanian, 2007:40). In fact, the 'more elegant and persuasive the policy text, the more necessary it is to examine the challenges to implementation' (King, 2007:364). Evidence could be found in all of the documents that contradicted what was planned or hoped for with what was understood to be realistic, despite frequent claims that unlike other recent policies *this one* represented a realistic framework (DocSA6/2003; DocN4/2006). Section 4.2 noted how much of the discourse in the documents was presented as visions and ambitions rather than genuine reflections of what was, or what was perceived to be, possible.

Secondly it is important to acknowledge the tension between national and international ideals that inform the documents. All five countries in this study are signatories to EFA and

the MDGs and the language of these agendas, as well as direct alignment of values with the values that underline these agendas, pervade the documents of all five countries, although in the Sudanese and South African documents the national agenda was often foregrounded. It has been suggested that globalisation has caused national states to lose capacity to create independent national policies (Dale, 1999) and that donors exert increasing control over the authority of national political agendas (Lukes, 2005). In the field of education McGrath (2012:1) discusses the exportation of 'metropolitan educational theories and policies' and Takyi-Amoako (2012) and King (2007) provide examples of how external donors whose goals embody those of EFA and MDG have exerted increasing pressure on the Ghanaian and Kenyan national governments over the last decade. This pressure has led to Ministries of Education prioritising 'policy areas that were emphasised in Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSPs)<sup>54</sup>, EFAs and MDGs' (Takyi-Amoako, 2012:131) and forced 'trade-offs' between national and international ideals (King, 2007:358).

Such studies have analysed national and international policies to a degree beyond the scope of this PhD which intends, instead, to provide a more general picture of the policy environment around teachers. But it is important to note the relevance of these findings and to highlight evidence of international agendas in the data:

'[this policy]... is based on the rationale of the overall policy goal of achieving Education For All (EFA) and the Government's commitment to the attainment of Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)... The vision which is in tandem with the Government's plan as articulated in the Economic Recovery Strategy therefore

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<sup>54</sup> PRSPs are documents required by the International Monetary Fund in the debt-relief for heavily indebted poor countries (HIPC) initiative.

provides the rationale for major reforms in the current education system.’  
(DocK4/2005/ii)

‘Since 2004 Nigeria has set in motion key reform measures and strategy to turn around the education system to meet the set goals and targets in line with the national needs and her commitment to global frameworks such as EFA and MDGs.’ (DocN8/2008/iv)

‘In view of Ghana’s membership of ECOWAS and other international organisations, and also in order to promote cross-border exchanges and trade, the Committee recommends the teaching of French throughout pre-tertiary education.’  
(DocG1/2002/xxiii/2.2.1)

These international agendas tended to dominate the language and focus of documents from Ghana, Nigeria and Kenya, particularly in documents intended for international audiences and especially (as would be expected) in reports for or authored by representatives from the World Bank and UNESCO (DocN8/2008; DocG6/2002; DocK6/2001). However, in the documents from Sudan and South Africa, priorities tend to focus more on national objectives.

In the South African data the dominant discourse was one of transformation:

‘The schooling system in South Africa was for decades a brutal instrument of oppression against the intellect and aspirations of the country’s youth... given the depths of oppression, deprivation and marginalisation visited on our people under



apartheid we have tackled the project of transformation with extreme urgency... our progress since 1994 has been a heroic feat.' (DocSA6/2003/3).

The South African documents frequently compare current government spending, enrolment figures, teacher education and pedagogic approaches with pre-1994 data (DocSA1/2010; DocSA14/2010). The aims and achievements of the education ministries are couched not in the EFA or MDG agenda but in the transformative policies of the ANC:

'...the legal foundation in the country makes schooling compulsory for all learners aged seven to 15. Compulsory education is the cornerstone of any modern, democratic society and this is embedded in the 1996 Constitution.' (DocSA6/2003/4)

While the valued goals evident in the Sudanese documents tend to resonate with those from the other countries, the discourse around these goals is firmly couched in patriotism and religious ideals. Sudan's five-year plan for education, for example, written by the Federal Ministry of Education and intended for national and international stakeholders aims:

'...primarily at setting a genuine educational system which encompasses all the elements of Sudanese character building and provides it with spiritual and intellectual capacities... our purposes are based on our cultural heritage and lofty values... to enhance our identity by liberating our common values, enriching our culture and cementing our unity and nation.' (DocSU1/2004/2)

UNESCO is mentioned only twice in the 27 page document, and these references are vague, for example, 'some other related organisations have participated including... UNESCO' (p.2). Sudan's report to the UNESCO EFA forum in 2000 (DocSU2/1999) lists five pillars of its 'Goals of Education For All' which include 'the consolidation of a religious doctrine' and 'the building-up of the sense of patriotism and loyalty' as underlining the quantitative goals around educational access and literacy stipulated by UNESCO (p.1).

The tensions between what is valued and what is genuinely possible, and between national and international values does not denigrate the usefulness of these documents. In fact, these tensions open up a space in which a capabilities framework can offer valuable insights:

'Locating policy goals and targets within debates about the kind of change that is desirable is an important first step in evaluating the viability of policy goals. If policy goals are situated within an ideological perspective that does not correspond to the perspectives and needs of a majority of targeted users it can impede the realisation of these goals.' (Thomas, 2007:43)

If valued goals are unviable and this can be demonstrated through teachers (the targeted users) lacking capability to achieve them, greater understanding might be reached concerning the perspectives, goals, needs and agency of international agendas, governments and teachers.

## **4.7 Chapter conclusion**

This chapter has presented the official organisational picture of teachers' work in Sub-Saharan Africa. It has shown how the collective perception of the overarching role of a teacher is an ambassador of the government and a partner in the shared project of national development. In contrast with this, the chapter also documented some of the negative discourse around teachers and their work. This discourse implies that teachers are not living up to their roles in the classroom and are, therefore, failing as ambassadors and development partners. Finally the chapter drew out an extensive list of valued behaviours and characteristics expected of teachers and re-articulated these as lists of capabilities and functionings. These lists represent the answer to the first research question: How are teachers' roles officially understood in Sub-Saharan Africa and what do governments value in teachers' work? The next chapter explores what is valued in teachers' work from the perspectives of teachers themselves.

## *Cameo 4 A Mathematics lesson*

(Gadanan School, Nigeria, 17<sup>th</sup> February 2011)

Mathematics lesson taught by Clarissa, supported by Agnes and Raif.

**08:43:** modern block, good condition, no potholes and un-pitted black board. All three class 6 classes in together, rough count 95 pupils.

**08:47:** Clarissa copying sums onto board from text book. Agnes shouting at pupils to concentrate 'if you don't look at the board I will flog you'.

**08:54:** Clarissa goes through the first example on the board. Then says. 'Right I will give you a simple one'. Calls boy up to demonstrate. Struggles to get to front of class because desks packed so tightly together. Tries to answer sum. Gets it wrong. Clarissa: 'Is he right?' (class silent) 'Is he right? No he's wrong'. Tells boy to sit down. Turns to me and says 'See how hard it is? They just don't understand'. Calls a girl to the front. Girl tries same sum and gets it wrong. A couple of pupils see the mistake and put their hands up calling 'malama malama'. Clarissa says 'ok so some of you do understand. Calls boy to front. Class noisy and turning away from board. Agnes shouts at them. Clarissa turns to Raif and says 'what am I doing wrong? Why don't they understand?' Raif replies 'No you tried, you really tried your best'. Meanwhile the boy gets sum right but forgets to include the decimal point. Clarissa slaps his hand with the cane until he realises his mistake. He goes back to his seat and Clarissa says 'clap for him [brandishes cane and slaps on board] now, class work'.

**09:10:** Pupils working on sums in exercise books. Teachers sit just outside door. When the noise level goes up Agnes slaps the cane against the door frame and shouts without leaving her seat.

**09:15:** Pupils start coming up to the desk to have their books marked. Long queue. Teachers move inside. Correct answers marked with a tick, wrong answers left blank. Pupils sent back to desks to re-do wrong sums. Pupils mostly rub out wrong answers and copy correct answers from neighbour, return to queue. Correct answers marked with a tick, wrong answers left blank. This cycle is repeated until nearly all pupils have a full page of ticks. Clarissa copies these final, full scores into the pupil record book.

**09:20:** Clarissa says 'ok those that are finished sit silently'. Pupils put heads on desk.

**09:30:** Bell rings. Pupils leave.

# Chapter 5 Teachers' professional lives: Teachers' perspectives

## **5.1. Introduction**

This chapter addresses the second research question: How do female teachers in rural Sub-Saharan African primary schools understand their role and what do they value in their work? Drawing on the narratives and experiences of female teachers working in rural schools in five countries it produces a list of teacher-generated professional capabilities and functionings.

Section 5.2 explores the lives and professional experiences of the seven focus teachers and highlights their professional values. Section 5.3 looks more closely at why these teachers value what they do. Section 5.4 incorporates these values into the wider data set and constructs a collective list of teacher-generated capabilities and functionings. It highlights similarities and differences between this list and the one generated from the official data in chapter 4. Section 5.5 concludes the chapter.

## **5.2. Teachers' lives and professional values**

This section draws on interview transcripts and field-notes to highlight the professional values that are most important to each of the seven focus teachers. The teachers are discussed separately at this point to underscore different experiences of working in rural school environments.

### **5.2.1 Ruth (Ghana)**

Ruth graduated from secondary school in 2001 and enrolled at a residential teacher training college to study for her 'Certificate A' qualification. At that time Cert:A was the minimum qualification for teaching at the primary level. She wanted to study for a degree in accounting (teaching was the last thing she wanted to do) but her family convinced her that teaching was the best option because she would be guaranteed a job. Ruth spent two years on campus and one year in a school as a practice teacher. During her practice year she met teachers who were studying part-time at the University of Cape Coast and she realised this could be the path to the degree she had always wanted. When she finished her training she visited the district office and persuaded them to post her to a school within travelling distance of the university.

She was sent to a village called Nkyen in Ghana's central region. It is a rural area but Nkyen straddles a new road that leads to Cape Coast. The village is less than a mile from the sea but has no piped water and a limited, sporadic electricity supply. The school is typically Ghanaian; a strip of three classroom blocks, painted yellow and brown, fronted by a wide veranda. The village is surrounded by salt ponds – processing and selling salt is the main occupation of the community. Pupil attendance at Nkyen is chronically low and it is not uncommon if fewer than 100 of the 280 registered students turn up. The relationship between the teachers and the community has reached an impasse as teachers' attempts to persuade parents to send their children to school are met with hostility and even violence. The teachers have boycotted the local market claiming they are over-charged.

When the fieldwork began in 2007 Ruth had been teaching at Nkyen for three years. During the week she stayed in the teachers' hostel next to the school. As the only female teacher at the hostel she was entitled to her own room which was just big enough for a

bed, a desk and a small gas stove. Nine male teachers shared the other two rooms between them. At weekends Ruth travelled to Cape Coast to visit her family and fiancé, attend lectures for her Diploma in Education, and sing in her church choir.

Over the duration of the fieldwork Ruth got married and moved into her husband's apartment in Cape Coast. She initially commuted to Nkyen but at the end of the school year requested a transfer to a school in town. She was posted to a large primary school on the outskirts of Cape Coast. Ruth is continuing with her diploma although the domestic pressures of married life and a stricter school environment mean she has less time to study and her grades have dropped from an A to a B/C average.

#### *Ruth's professional values*

Ruth places a high value on her professional development, which she identifies as her first priority in the data from both field visits. While her main reason for pursuing higher qualifications is because they will enable her to move out of primary level teaching she also realises the positive impact it has had on her work: 'Now I have started distance education I see that I lack certain things [the Cert:A] is not enough... you should have to learn further because when you study you see that what you have been doing is not all that perfect.' Ruth's dedication to her studies often over-rode her commitment to her teaching. When fewer than ten of her Nkyen pupils turned up Ruth would use the day to study.

Ruth places a high value on the hierarchy of the education system and on people adhering to the specific rules and regulations of their level. She values authority, although only when it is visibly exercised: 'This is my job. I know that if I don't do it and the officers come around they might sack me.' In her new school she feels the commitment and constant

presence of the head teacher motivates her and the other staff to work hard: 'She herself comes to school early, and when she comes she will not sit in the office, she'll be going round, supervising the children... there is no way for you to sit in the classroom, you have to be out there.' The motivating presence of authoritarian figures is also evident when she compares the level of supervision between Nkyen and her school in Cape Coast:

'At Nkyen they were coming maybe once in a term, if that, so you didn't fear them. Here they come more than three times in one term and that is very positive for me, it keeps me on my toes all of the time. It means you are always on your feet doing the right thing.'

In the data from Nkyen, Ruth places a high value on her role in inspiring pupils to have ambitions. She feels that a key reason behind the absenteeism is because the children have nothing to aspire to other than working on the salt farms:

'These children, they really need help. They don't see a future for themselves. You ask them what they want to be and they don't know: all they know is salt. One will say taxi-driver, maybe two will want to be a teacher. That is all they see around, that is all they see as opportunities for jobs.'

She is aware that most of her pupils will not attend secondary school and feels it is her job to make them aware of available scholarships. This aspect of her role appeared to be less valued in Cape Coast where she felt parents – who were mostly educated – 'should take care of that aspect of their learning'.



### **5.2.2 Habibah (Nigeria)**

Habibah started teaching in 2003 after a twenty year career break to raise her nine children. After secondary school she trained as a social worker for children with behavioural difficulties but gave this up when she married and moved across the country to live in Gadan, her husband's village. When her youngest child started school Habibah approached the district education office for a job. They placed her in the village school with the condition that she enrolled on an in-service NCE programme.

Gadan, north of Kaduna, is a dense and fast-growing maze of narrow sandy streets and high compound walls. It has piped water and electricity although both are erratic; teachers habitually flick the switch for the fan as they enter the head teacher's office, but it rarely powers into life. Classrooms have light bulb holders but no light bulbs. The expansion of the village coupled with increasing awareness of free education means that even though the school operates a double-shift system, classes are large and over-crowded. Pupils sit four or five to a desk designed for two and, in the younger years, on the floor.

The school is built around a playground. Over the duration of the fieldwork two new classroom blocks were constructed, a play-area was installed and building began for a mosque. But the new classrooms did little to solve the space issues because the original buildings had fallen into disrepair and were deemed too dangerous to teach in. To save money, builders had taken sand from the playground to mix into cement for the new buildings. The playground, soft and sandy in 2007, was hard and potholed in 2011. Further dilapidation was evident: paint was peeling, desks had collapsed, the play-area had been vandalised and the bright green and white Nigerian flag that had flown above the head teacher's office four years earlier was missing.

At the start of the research in 2007 Habibah taught in the nursery school and taught her NCE subjects, English and Social Studies, at primary level. By the second field visit in 2011 she had completed her NCE, enrolled at the National Open University of Nigeria for a Degree in Early Childhood Studies and had been promoted to head of the nursery section. Her husband had been promoted to local government director and could afford to pay for Habibah's university studies as well as a driver to escort her to study sessions in Kaduna.

### *Habibah's professional values*

The most prevalent theme in Habibah's narratives relates to the nurturing and affective aspects of teaching. She has fond memories of the love shown to her by her own teachers and uses these as her role-models in her work. She also draws on her earlier career as a social worker and the skills she developed relating to children with behavioural difficulties:

'The first thing you have to do is give children affection. Show them that it's not something to be a show-off, it's something to be loved. You have to draw yourself close to children so they love you and respect you.'

She believes that 'if they are not afraid of you they can come to you with any of their problems – whether inside or outside school – and you can solve them'. She repeatedly emphasises the importance of knowing each child personally before you can teach them and claims the 'best thing' about working at Gadanani is the relationship between the teachers and the children. She knows she is doing her job well when pupils knock on her door to say 'Malama! Malama! [teacher] hello!'

She also regularly refers to her role as 'bringing up' her pupils and feels that she is 'teaching them and guiding them outside of school too'. She places a high value on her

responsibility as a role-model in terms of punctuality, dress and 'putting in good guiding morals.' Similarly she appears to draw loose boundaries between her relationship with her pupils and her own children:

'A mother is always a teacher! So the experiences I have had with children in the past, and now the children I have in my house, children are part and parcel of my life now, everywhere I go I deal with children!... the only difference is that at home I also have to cook!'

The high value Habibah places on the emotional aspect of her role has led her to specialise in early years teaching, but the pursuit of a BEd links to another highly valued aspect of her role.

'Well, you cannot just drop into a class because you speak English or because you have children or just know how to write! You need to be trained effectively so it is important that I keep learning. I'm doing it for knowledge, and my own interests, not for the financial aspect... Because you can't keep teaching the same thing, you have to learn before passing the knowledge to the little ones [laughs] so I keep learning too!'

Habibah also places a high value on planning in advance. This is to ensure she has sufficient knowledge of a lesson's content and also to ensure that she is able to cover everything in the allotted time. She spends several hours a day at home planning lessons (sometimes waking up at 1am to work when her children are asleep). She expressed bemusement about how some teachers:

‘...just walk into a classroom and pick up where they left off... Could I just go to the class and teach? No, before you teach you have to get some information, you need to know it and you need to study it yourself so when it comes to teaching the children you are organised and ready to answer questions.’

She also places a high value on learning resources. This is evident in the data from both field visits, although more so during the second visit where she discussed more examples of different resources and teaching scenarios where she felt they were useful.

### ***5.2.3 Agnes (Nigeria)***

Agnes is in her fifties and teaches in the same school as Habibah. She lives with her aunt in a village two miles south of Gadan. Agnes is married with three children but ten years ago her husband took Agnes’s best friend as a second wife and moved her into their home. Polygamy is common in the Islamic state of Kaduna but was a shock to Agnes and the Catholic community to which she belongs. Agnes and her youngest child moved in with her aunt.

Agnes started training as a nurse but dropped out when she realised she didn’t like working with dead bodies. She switched to teacher training and graduated with a teaching certificate. Like Habibah she moved across the country to marry and was posted to Gadan but wasn’t allocated teaching duties for several weeks because she didn’t speak Hausa. Eventually she was asked to teach grade 6 Science because none of the other teachers wanted to do it and by grade 6 the pupils’ English was deemed to be strong enough that she could teach in English. Twenty years later Agnes still cannot speak Hausa

so she is still teaching grade 6 Science, has limited communication with her colleagues and almost no contact with the local community.

Agnes would love to upgrade her qualifications but cannot afford to. Her husband is paying their children's university fees as well as supporting his new wife and child and she feels she cannot ask him for any more. She is very religious and attends mass at the Catholic Cathedral in Kaduna every Sunday. Ideally she would like to teach in Kaduna but worries that the commute would be too expensive.

#### *Agnes's professional values*

Punctuality is the strongest value identified in Agnes's narratives and observations of her professional practice. Every morning during the fieldwork she was the first teacher on site. The teachers' attendance log verified that this was normal behaviour. Her main reason for requesting a school near to her village was so that she would be able to get to work on time, and get home again without wasting time travelling:

'They asked, "madam where are you living?" I said where... They asked "would you like to be in the bush?" I said "no, I want to be in a village where it is motorable". Some bush schools you cannot get motor to, like I know people teaching in the bush and they are always standing by the side of the road waiting, there is hardly ever any motor... they will always be late. So that's why I like here in the village, here you can come early, do your job and go.'

The value Agnes places on punctuality can be attributed to three things. First she gets a sense of personal satisfaction about being 'first':

'I don't like to be late in anything I'm doing, even church I will always be early, I always want to be first in everything I am doing. Even when my kids were little I would wake them early, bathe them, dress them and then they would be first at school! You see me, I don't like late.'

Secondly she strives to be on time to impress the head teacher: 'My role is this, I try to please the head mistress, I come early... so she will be very happy with me and say oh malama Agnes is really helping me'. Agnes does this even though she knows it makes her unpopular among the other staff, many of whom are perpetually late. The third reason she values punctuality is because she believes that teachers have a duty to lead by example: 'You should show example by yourself... Everything you do as a teacher the pupils will follow'.

Agnes's second most valued aspect of teaching is neatness – both in terms of her appearance and that of the school grounds: 'And another thing, when you are coming to school you can't come like mad people, you have to dress fine'. She cited once more the approval of the head teacher and setting an example to the pupils but also:

'...normally in schools they do the best teacher. They will put a photograph up of the best teacher of the month and I see from these pictures that every month this teacher is looking neat. Here they are not doing it... but even though we don't have the competition we know that neatness is important because the other schools do it.'

Agnes values the role of the teacher as a disciplinarian, particularly in village schools. She talked often of her 'home state', 'town schools' and 'private schools' where she claimed

discipline was not a problem. At Gadanan she manages pupil behaviour with threats and is proud to be considered the strictest teacher in the school:

‘Well the cane is not the best, what I believe in is words like “shut up”, “hold your tongue”, you know, little things like “if you do it again I will flog you”. A reasonable child will not do it again. [Do they believe you?] Yes, they know I am the serious kind. [Have you ever carried out the threat?] No, the threat is the punishment more than the actual cane.’

Although Agnes cannot afford to pursue further study, it is something she values highly. She feels this would help her expand her teaching repertoire but her main reason is the respect it would give her. She is inspired by her mother who had a master’s degree:

‘She liked reading. Yes, I was inspired by that, it made her look so decent... Sometimes my daddy would say, “woman, ah aren’t you tired?” and she would say “no, leave me alone”. And I like that! And it makes a man give you more respect, like my daddy respected her for it. I like it but I can’t afford it for myself.’

#### ***5.2.4 Cecilia (Kenya)***

Cecilia is in her late twenties and works at Kijani primary school in Kenya’s Nakuru District. The school is surrounded by lush, green tea plantations and the hills are dotted with acacia trees. The area is fertile but extremely poor. Ten years ago a factory – which was the only employer for several miles – shut down. The (mostly illiterate) workers stayed but have little or no income. Some work on the tea plantations but most survive off small

subsistence plots. In the dry season pupils are lucky to eat one meal a day. Despite this the school consistently achieves the highest results in the district.

Cecilia is one of eleven children, three of whom are now teachers. She originally wanted to be a nurse but after several months waiting for a place at nursing college decided to apply for teaching too and accept whichever she was offered first. Cecilia's parents, who are illiterate farmers, are incredibly proud that she is a teacher and share her belief that it is a noble job and a demonstration of following God's plan.

Cecilia's husband is also a teacher and they met during her first teaching post at an extremely rural school in Northern Kenya. There was no accommodation so Cecilia rented a room in town and walked 10km to school each day. When her husband was transferred to Nakuru, she followed, although she was posted to Kijani at the opposite end of the district. At the start of the fieldwork in 2007, it was not feasible for them to live together. Instead Cecilia rented a small room near to Kijani which she shared with their young son. Cecilia was keen to enrol on a professional development course in early childhood studies but at that time the family's priority was living together. All of their money went into building a house half-way between their two schools.

Kijani experienced violence and rioting following the 2007 election. Students and staff were killed, or fled. While tensions had cooled by the second field visit in 2009 the school was struggling with a reduced number of teachers and an increased number of displaced students. Cecilia's class grew from 30 to over 60 pupils. By this time the family home was complete and, for the first time since they were married, the family lived all together. Cecilia's enrolment on a professional development course had been postponed twice, first



because of the political unrest and later because she was pregnant again and her application was turned down.

### *Cecilia's professional values*

Cecilia believes that the role of a teacher is to help children 'to become whatever they want to become and make that child a better person through education'. She regularly describes her role as 'preparing', 'creating' or 'moulding' the pupils for their future in terms of professional and personal aspects. She feels that this is an enormous responsibility, particularly in a rural school where the parents are mostly uneducated and 'usually don't know the value of education'. She draws on memories of how her own teachers inspired her:

'Primary teachers, they can change a child so much, they changed me! A teacher can have so much influence on a farming child because they show themselves to be from another world and they can point a child in the right direction.'

This perception influences her teaching:

'Parents don't play a big role, I mean round here they don't even encourage the children to become what they want to become, maybe they don't even understand that their children can contribute to making the country better. But as teachers we are supposed to be very positive, you encourage them; you try to mould them so they become a good person and have good character.'

However, her awareness that not every child will succeed academically, and that rural poverty makes it impossible for some pupils to finish primary education, led Cecilia to dig

up part of her classroom to create a vegetable patch and teach farming skills (see cameo 1).

A key value for Cecilia is her belief that teaching is a 'noble profession'. She consistently spoke about how she shows commitment to teaching not because she fears the head teacher or the education officials but because she fears God:

'...when [the head teacher] is not here I do not relax. I work because there is the supervisor, and he is God. I am dealing with someone's life – I would not like anyone to joke around with my child's life – and that knowledge helps me so much and makes me work at my level best.'

In relation to this Cecilia places a high value on the vocational aspects of teaching, the skills that 'start inside you' and can't be developed through training. She said: 'it's not about just being a professional; it's about caring, about those natural aspects that make a teacher. It has to be yourself, it has to come from the heart.'

However, Cecilia claims her main priority is ensuring her pupils score highly in exams:

'I am [at my happiest] when they do exams and they pass and I see them being in a good position [in the league table]. Then I know they are getting it and I feel good... then there are times I feel so negative, like when they do an exam and they fail. Whenever they get bad marks I feel disappointed in my job.'

Cecilia was the only teacher for whom the pursuit of high grades featured in the most valued aspects of her work.

### **5.2.5 Mandisa (South Africa)**

Mandisa wanted to be a psychologist but her parents had no money to pay university fees. Instead she studied for a Bachelor's in Education on a scholarship scheme and planned to convert to psychology once she had her degree. The scholarship came with a condition that she spent four years working as a teacher. Posted to a primary school in an extremely impoverished area she initially felt helpless and disliked her job intensely. However, the head teacher put all of his energies into improving the school by seeking donations from local businesses, lobbying the district office for more support and funds and encouraging his teachers to follow his lead and run extra sessions to support pupils. His attitude changed Mandisa's mind about teaching and she decided to follow his example for the rest of her career (see cameo 2).

In 1994 Mandisa was posted to a headship (with teaching duties) at Isibane School in a township in the Eastern Cape. Isibane was categorised by the district office as 'Dysfunctional'. The community is extremely poor. Most children are raised by their grandparents who have little or no income and one in ten pupils at Isibane are HIV positive. Absenteeism was rife, the school was over-crowded and in a state of dilapidation and drunks from a nearby bar used to harass the pupils and staff.

Mandisa lobbied local businesses, forged links with the local community and invested in the school infrastructure. She convinced a local dentist to provide free check-ups for the pupils, set up a community vegetable garden, has acquired computers and set up a scheme where local business men and women can sponsor a pupil's school fees and uniform costs. She has helped the grandparents and guardians of her pupils claim child

benefits and set up a scheme to ensure HIV positive pupils are supported by local families and guaranteed one hot meal a day (without which they are not entitled to government-provided antiretrovirals).

Mandisa lives in Grahamstown. She is divorced with two grown up daughters. She started studying for a Master's in Education in 2006 but suspended her studies to look after one of her pupils (see cameo 7). During the second field visit in 2010 Mandisa's granddaughters from Cape Town were also living with her. Now she is taking care of three children she has started to delegate her extra-curricular workload to other teachers but still spends 8-10 hours a day at school and often works on Saturdays.

#### *Mandisa's professional values*

Mandisa most prominently values the role of the school as a community hub, serving the educational, social and health needs of its pupils and their families:

'I realise my responsibilities should not be confined within the school yard, I should go into the community where those children come from. I cannot expect to have effective learning from a child who comes from an unhappy home situation.'

During the second field visit Mandisa was dealing with a situation where a grade 5 pupil was being raped by her uncle. Mandisa used this as an example of how teachers' work extends out in to communities:

'I don't know if all teachers would get involved in this issue, because it happens at home, but I want people to realise that these things affect a school and of course they affect the girl's learning. The parents did not know how to deal with it... These

issues, they break my heart but the pain makes me know that I must do something.

I cannot say because it is not [in school] it is not my problem.'

To effectively offer this support Mandisa values her role as someone the community can trust and rely on; she worked hard to overcome the 'rift' between the school and the community:

'They trust us so much now they are even prepared to come into the school and have their HIV tests. They trust that we will do something about it and not just say "ok you can go" and start gossiping about it.'

She tries to ensure that everybody feels welcome at the school, 'even if [they] are not educated [they] have a role to play in the school because everybody is gifted with some wisdom, everyone has something to contribute.'

In relation to this Mandisa feels strongly about teachers drawing out pupils' individual talents, but recognises that some learners aren't academic and will not go on to secondary school. Rather than 'waste their time' by 'hammering home the curriculum', she focuses on developing the skills they have so they can use them in the community or in employment when they leave primary school:

'We have a number of children with barriers to learning, you know, these kids will never thrive in mainstream education. What frustrates me most is that these children are aware that they can't learn anything from the curriculum. I teach grade 7 and a girl came to me and said "can you do me a favour? Can you bring me some needles and wool so I can knit while you are teaching?" That is a cry for help

you know? ... So of course I did and now she is calm. How can I help that child by forcing her to study when we both know there is no way she can succeed academically? I can't. She needs to follow a different path.'

Mandisa believes that teachers and parents are best placed to understand the needs of their learners – 'I have never stuck to a policy as such'. A key example of this is her long-running, un-authorised (by the district office) scheme of introducing English as the language of instruction, as well as Xhosa, from grade 1 instead of following the official policy which states that Xhosa should be used in grades 1-3 and English from grade 4 – a transition that Mandisa feels is 'too taxing on learners and educators.'

Mandisa also feels passionately about opening children's eyes to possibilities beyond the township and finding ways to nurture ambition: '...maybe it's because I come from a poor background myself... my parents only educated me as far as grade 10, from there upwards it was sponsorships and bursaries'. As well as finding sponsors for her brightest and poorest learners she also recruits motivational speakers to come to the school, people who can:

'...positively influence my people to see that even those children who come from very poor homes can become presidents and prime ministers one day. You know? They can become doctors and lawyers one day, I truly believe that, so they deserve the best.'

### **5.2.6 Nomfundo (South Africa)**

Nomfundo has taught at Isibane since 1990. Her first teaching post was in Alexandria but she was frustrated by the lack of libraries and resources and its distance from Rhodes University where she hoped to continue studying. She had taught at Isibane during her teaching practice and approached the then principal for a job.

Nomfundo is one of ten children. They were brought up on a farm and travelled to a school on a location<sup>55</sup>. Her father was illiterate but her mother worked for a white family who lent her books. After school Nomfundo applied for a place at nursing college but after two years had not been accepted. Bored and frustrated she applied for teaching college and was accepted immediately.

Since qualifying as a teacher Nomfundo has studied for three self-funded diplomas and two bachelor's degrees. She is keen to study for a master's but as a single parent with a young daughter doesn't have the time. Nomfundo lives in town and drives to Isibane each day. Her daughter studies at a private school which costs R10,000 a term<sup>56</sup>. Nomfundo is heavily involved with extra-curricula activities at Isibane. She runs a dance programme with students from a nearby college, holds additional reading classes for learners and coordinates a youth-journalism club in collaboration with a local newspaper.

Although she teaches English and Technology in the upper school, Nomfundo spent one year covering a grade 1 post and found it to be the most fulfilling year of her career. With Mandisa she devised a bilingual curriculum for the learners, introducing them to English three years earlier than the language policy suggested. Amazed at the results they invited

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<sup>55</sup> An alternative word for township.

<sup>56</sup> In October 2010 when the fieldwork was carried out R10,000 was approximately \$1300. (Nomfundo earned R9000 a month).

the district office to come and observe a lesson. The official determined that Nomfundo was wasted at grade 1 and insisted she be permanently located in the upper school. Every year Nomfundo puts in a request to go back to grade 1 because she feels she is getting stagnant and needs a new challenge.

### *Nomfundo's professional values*

Nomfundo's main priority is showing learners that living in a township is not a barrier to success. She places a high value on her role to inspire and equip learners with the skills to experience life – geographically and culturally – beyond the township boundaries:

'A key thing for me is not to think I am so different from teachers in town. The only difference is that they are teaching in a school that is well-equipped and I am not, that I am far away and they are not... but it doesn't mean I can't access these things and impart the knowledge to the kids here. Teachers here think they don't need to use the internet for information because the internet is not here, I think I can use the internet in town to take extra information to my kids as well as a teacher in the town, I just have to carry the information in my head for a bit longer before I share it with them.'

Nomfundo's values are centred on the belief that teachers should put pupils first. This influences all aspects of her work in school and extends to her choice of union. She is one of only three teachers at Isibane (including Mandisa) to choose NAPTOSA<sup>57</sup> over the more popular teachers' union SADTU<sup>58</sup>:

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<sup>57</sup> National Professional Teachers' Organisation of South Africa

<sup>58</sup> South Africa Democratic Teachers' Union.



'I like the principles of NAPTOSA because they put the kids first. Union meetings are supposed to be after contact time – that is after 2pm. You cannot go any time and leave the learners. You don't do that! The other unions have meetings at any time, they just do that, they just call a meeting and the kids are left alone.'

While Nomfundo is very aware of the challenges her learners face at home, she does not engage with these issues in an affective way – she does not see herself as a substitute parent – rather she prioritises helping the learners to develop skills to remove themselves from their different poverties. She believes teachers should be facilitators of opportunity. Her role model is Maya Angelou:

'When she was talking about her son, she afforded him the all the opportunities but obviously you know, kids sometimes don't take opportunities... and her son suffered the consequences. And she doesn't regret it because she did what she could. So... it's a sad thing when people don't take advantage of opportunities. I will make an example of [the journalism club]... It is exposing them to a lot and offering them a lot of opportunities. But... the problem is commitment... you explain to them, you need to grab this with both hands. But some don't make use of it. They run away.'

While Nomfundo respects the exam-oriented system for which she is preparing the learners she feels that the 'pace set by the department risks leaving learners behind'. Rather than place a high value on top grades, she values the development of key skills, particularly in language. She places little value on the policy that teachers write down everything they do: 'I value working, teaching, not all this paperwork. I am guided by the

goals I set for my learners, not by government targets'. When asked what gives her most pleasure as a teacher she answered:

'Seeing the development of a learner that I've been with for three or four years... I am very happy when I ask them to do some creative writing, the things they write, the way they craft the English language when previously they could barely write a sentence... [this] makes me feel like I've done my job.'

### ***5.2.7 Sabeera (Sudan)***

Sabeera is one of seven – all female – teachers at bab alnahr basic school for girls. Bab alnahr is on the banks of the White Nile an hour's drive from Khartoum. The village, which looms suddenly out of the dusty, landscape, is large and sand-coloured with flat-roofed buildings hidden behind high compound walls. Most villagers are farmers who work on the fertile land next to the river. The village has two small shops selling bread, soft drinks and household goods. The school is painted white and green and encloses a large tree-filled courtyard. Next door is the teachers' hostel; a dilapidated, two-roomed structure with a sand-floor, sporadic electricity and a tap in the courtyard which teachers use for cooking and washing. At the first field visit in 2007 the teachers living in the hostel used the school toilet – a hole in the ground with only a low wall for privacy. At the second visit in 2009 a new toilet block had been built in the school grounds with a reserved cubicle for teachers and a lockable door.

Sabeera, however, is married to the village Imam and lives in a large, modern house with a separate, tiled bathroom and a courtyard dominated by an enormous satellite dish. During the second field visit Sabeera hosted a house-warming party in the new building

constructed for her, her mother and her children (her husband and other male relatives slept in the main house). Sabeera studied law at the University of Khartoum but returned home after graduation to get married. She started teaching English at bab alnahr, the school she attended as a child. Bab alnahr is headed by a woman who is Sabeera's cousin and also her sister-in-law; most people in the local area are descendents of the same tribe and most villagers are from the same family, related to each other in multiple ways. Though she has a degree, Sabeera has no teaching qualification and is studying for an in-service Diploma in Education at the request of the district education office.

Although she never wanted to be a teacher, now that she is working at bab alnahr Sabeera feels she has found her vocation. She is a popular and well-respected member of her community and communicates regularly with her pupils' parents both professionally and socially. While she worries about the small number of girls who are taken out of school to be married, attendance is generally high. She believes that teaching is the best job for women because it enables them a professional status and an income without detracting from their duties as wives and mothers.

#### *Sabeera's professional values*

Sabeera's main priority is honouring Allah by doing the 'prophet's job'. Her commitment to Islam, and her role in delivering its teachings, permeates all that she values in her work. She lists her role models as the prophet Muhammad, then the head teacher and claims:

'Teaching in Sudan is more important [than other countries] because of our devotion to Allah and the Prophet Muhammad. Teaching our children, and continuing to learn ourselves is the most important thing in our life.'

She values being a role-model for pupils, 'helping them to see the right way to be, to be with others'. This 'right way' is determined by Allah and articulated by the Ministry of Education; Sabeera sees herself as an 'implementer of the whole system' whose role it is to 'carry out Sudan's educational aims'.

In relation to this, Sabeera places a high value on the hierarchy of the education system, on respecting one's place in this hierarchy and not stepping out of line. Teachers, for example, are all on the same level so no teacher would disrespect another teacher by criticising them. The high value placed on cooperation was shared by Sabeera's colleagues. In the focus group they discussed how tensions are resolved between teachers and education officials:

'There is always time for discussion. They would respect our ideas... but we also respect them and the job they are doing and the experience that they have.'

This sense that everyone in the education system is working together to pursue the goals of Islam was also evident in Sabeera's narratives about teachers striking:

'... in the end we feel it is the prophet's job so we do not complain and do not go on strike. We do not complain by stopping our work. Issues are resolved through discussions and would not mean the teachers had to leave their desks.'

Sabeera also values how her role enables her to reach out into the community and support poorer families. Teachers at bab alnahr work with a social worker to identify their specific needs. Sabeera believes that kindness is a key quality of a good teacher and that 'helping others is one of the best ways to show the children how to treat each other, that they

should also help those less fortunate'. Closely related to this she believes that the qualities of a good teacher should mirror those of a good citizen. When asked about her life goals she answered:

'I ask Allah to bless me and to help me perform well. I ask him to give me a message at home and at school so I know the proper way to be... in life everything you do is linked somehow. My role is a matter of bringing up children, whether at school or at home the message is the same. My students are like my children. There is no difference.'

### **5.2.8 Summary**

While section 5.2 presented the teachers separately the next section will draw together their experiences and main professional values (or functionings). However, table 5.1 summarises the data presented in section 5.2 and serves as a quick reference point.

<b>Country</b>	<b>Teacher</b>	<b>Main professional functionings</b>
<b>Ghana</b>	Ruth	Professional development Respecting education system hierarchy Inspiring pupils Neatness
<b>Nigeria</b>	Habibah	Loving and nurturing children Professional development Moral behaviour Planning and organisational skills
	Agnes	Punctuality Neatness Discipline Professional development
<b>Kenya</b>	Cecilia	Loving and nurturing children Inspiring pupils Developing pupils' skills outside curriculum Pursuing high grades Serving God through teaching
<b>South Africa</b>	Mandisa	Community development Ensuring pupils' physical and psychological wellbeing Autonomy Inspiring pupils Developing pupils' skills outside curriculum
	Nomfundo	Inspiring pupils Language skills Developing pupils' skills outside curriculum Autonomy Being motivated
<b>Sudan</b>	Sabeera	Serving Allah through teaching Religious guidance Respecting education system hierarchy Charity and kindness

**Table 5.1 Summary of teachers' individually valued functionings**

### **5.3 Teachers' professional values: personal and contextual influences**

The data in section 5.2 reveals two key findings. First it shows how varied experiences of teaching can be for women working in rural schools and that teachers value a range of different things in their work. Secondly while it suggests how different contexts and experiences contribute to the shaping of teachers' professional values, it also shows how teachers working in similar contexts can value very different things.

This section looks across these different experiences in order to make sense of why the teachers value what they do. This is important for this study for two reasons. First because Sen highlights the importance of seeing individuals in the context of the social influences that operate on them:

‘when someone thinks, and chooses and does something it is, for sure, that person and not someone else who is doing these things but it would be hard to understand why and how he or she undertakes these activities without some comprehension of his or her societal relations’ (Sen, 2009:245).

To understand why the teachers value what they do, therefore, it is necessary to better understand their lives.

The second reason is because it responds to the criticism of the capability approach highlighted in chapter 2: the assumption that ‘what is valued is also good’ (Unterhalter et al, 2007:13). If, as this thesis argues, good and effective teaching must be partly defined by how different societies understand the purpose of education (UNESCO, 2005) and that teachers are key to interpreting these understandings, it is crucial that what teachers value is explored and justified. It is important to understand why teachers hold these professional values to ensure that they are things they ‘have reason to value’ (Sen, 1999:19) and are genuinely what is understood to be ‘good’.

Analysis of why teachers value the things they do in their work revealed four main themes: career path, rurality and relationships, motherhood and religion. These are discussed below.

### **5.3.1 Career path**

It is well-established in both the literature reviewed in chapter 2 and the documents analysed in chapter 4 that teaching in Sub-Saharan Africa is a 'last choice' career for many (e.g. VSO, 2009; DocG3/2002). The lack of passion for teaching among new graduates is cited as a key reason for low motivation in the profession. The documents also recognised this as a key contribution to low teacher quality. The data in this study reveals a slightly different story.

None of the seven teachers planned to be a teacher. They all entered the profession reluctantly or because it was the only option available:

'...for two years I was looking for a job until I decided, ach! Time is of the essence I'm getting old, I need to be independent. Let me take teaching because teaching was the only option at that moment.' (Nomfundo)

Ruth was pressured into teaching by her aunt who convinced her that she would be guaranteed a job when she finished her training. From the start she saw teaching as a ticket to something else. Initially this was job security and an income, later it became the prospect of the degree she had always wanted to pursue:

'So even though it wasn't my choice I used to encourage myself, when I finish I will not stay in the house and every month I will get something.' (Ruth)

'I saw some of the teachers taking this kind of thing and they told me about it. When you finish college you get Cert:A. Then you can enter the University and it is three years for the diploma then two for the degree.' (Ruth)



Although Ruth's main priority is her professional development, it would be too simplistic to suggest that she is using teaching as a 'stepping stone'. Her experiences at Nkyen combined with her diploma programme have refocused her professional values:

'...now I see I lack certain things. When you come out from college you should have to learn further because... it's not enough. You just have been doing something, but when you study you see that what you have been doing is not all that perfect... For example... when see some pupils disturbing and you cane them, and you be insulting them just so you can get on with the lesson but...then you see that you don't have to insult them. Maybe they need your attention. Maybe the person is in trouble before coming to school... that is why she is behaving that way. Caning them and then insulting them will not solve the problem... I see that now that I need to inspire these pupils, not insult them.' (Ruth)

Since beginning her diploma Ruth's professional values have moved beyond controlling and delivering information to her class. She increasingly feels it is her duty to have an awareness of their backgrounds and involvement in their futures. Ruth no longer wants to be an accountant; she intends to stay in education, gradually gaining experience and qualifications until she can become a tutor at a teacher training institute and, ultimately, a lecturer teaching teachers at a university.

Habibah's route into teaching was the most enthusiastic. After spending twenty years raising her children she wanted to go back to work but needed a job that was local and flexible. The high value she places on her professional development is influenced by her late entry to the teaching profession. She feels a need to catch up with her colleagues and

also with her own children at university. She wants to be able to hold her own in conversations with her family and show them, especially her daughters, that it is possible to combine family life with academic achievement.

Sabeera began teaching because it was the only career available to her, despite having a law degree, when she moved home to start a family. Sabeera knows she is unlikely to change her career and so her focus is on being the best teacher she can be and acquiring as many qualifications as she can to facilitate this:

‘I didn’t want to be a teacher. But when I began to practise teaching... even if they gave me my own special office to be a lawyer in Khartoum I would not want to go back. I see myself as a teacher forever now and I just hope that I can do my job well and achieve well in all areas of it. Allah asked us to dedicate ourselves to learning from the beginning of life until death so I would like to continue my studies so I can be the best possible teacher.’ (Sabeera)

Agnes’s role as a class 6 Science teacher is a last resort in three ways. First she trained as a teacher because there was no other option for her, secondly she was forced into teaching class 6 because she could not communicate with the younger children and thirdly she opted for Science because none of the other teachers wanted to teach it:

‘The other teachers rejected Science. There’s no problem, I can handle all subjects. So when I saw that people didn’t like it I chose it.’ (Agnes)

Agnes’s acceptance of her role appears to influence her professional values. She has little passion for Science and finds it difficult to teach with one out-of-date text book and a

magnet she bought with her own money (see cameo 3). Her inability to change her situation means she cannot engage with more in-depth pedagogies or more meaningful aspects of teaching. This inability to move forwards in her career appears to have contributed to a narrower set of valued objectives than the other teachers. For her, teaching consists of a clear set of rules and behaviours – such as punctuality and control – that she is able, and highly motivated, to pursue:

‘What makes a good teacher? Number one: discipline. Number two: punctual. Number three: neatness... These things yeah, they make a good teacher.’ (Agnes)

It seems then, the teachers’ values are not only influenced by how they enter the profession but also by the professional paths they are able to imagine for themselves in the future. Their values, which impact on their motivation, are related to how and where they imagine their career progressing or, for some, whether or not they *can* imagine it progressing.

### ***5.3.2 Teachers, rurality and relationships***

There is an assumption in the literature that teachers fare better and are more content in urban schools. However, the data in this study suggests that teachers’ experiences of rurality are more complex. All of the teachers in this study were born in rural areas and attended rural primary schools. While their secondary education tended to take place in an urban setting, their rural upbringing is important because they are all familiar with and can empathise with rural livelihoods and lifestyles. The literature suggests that teachers dislike rural environments, while this study suggests that teachers dislike being away from the things that matter to them. If the things that matter to teachers - Habibah’s family in

Gadanan, a private school for Nomfundo's daughter, or Ruth's university in Cape Coast - are close by and accessible, rural areas are manageable and even preferable. This section shows how teachers' values are influenced by rural settings and the relationships they have in these settings.

The teachers in this study all worked in rural locations. It is tempting, drawing on the literature around teachers, to perceive a rural-urban dichotomy and, early on in the fieldwork, it became clear that some interview questions trapped teachers into reinforcing this divide<sup>59</sup>. The teachers' informal narratives, however, depicted a rural-urban continuum rather than a dichotomy. Their perception of their villages was in relation to other places on the continuum rather than simply in relation to 'urban schools'. For example, Cecilia's school is a twenty minute matatu<sup>60</sup> ride from her village. In her first job she had to walk 10km to school, so Cecilia sees her current post as a great improvement. Other teachers also implied that they felt relatively fortunate to be where they were on the continuum:

'But I would rather be here, because further north from here there is no electricity, no water, no phone reception, the houses are mud and there are no places of interest. Yeah, it would be a huge problem for me.' (Ruth)

This idea of a continuum of rurality has a strong influence on the teachers' values which appear to be shaped by their perceptions of the contexts in which they do not work as well as their perceptions of the contexts in which they do. Nomfundo, for example, values her role in encouraging her learners to experience life beyond the township, a value that has been shaped by the proximity of the school to the town but one that she did not prioritise

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<sup>59</sup> For example: 'can you tell me what it is like teaching in a rural area?'

<sup>60</sup> Mini-bus taxi.

when she taught in a farm school. Agnes's main priority of punctuality is influenced by her ability to get to school on time – something she knows would not be possible if she was teaching in the bush. At Nkyen Ruth feels she needs to inspire the pupils. At the school in Cape Coast she places less value on this role. The high value Agnes places on discipline relates to how she compares pupil behaviour at Gadanan with how she imagines pupil behaviour in the town: 'because they're more committed down there, no lates! No misbehaviours! I think as you get closer to town you teach more and shout less'.

The teachers' values also appear to be shaped by their understandings of the communities in which they teach. This chapter has shown how Ruth values her role in inspiring the pupils because she knows that the parents of the pupils have little exposure to careers other than salt production or farming and she feels the teachers have a responsibility to open the pupils' eyes to alternative careers. Nomfundo's main priority is to expose the pupils to life outside the township – something she knows most of the parents and carers are unable to do. Cecilia estimates that fewer than 10 of the pupils at Kijani have visited Nakuru (the nearest town). While she is unable to take them there physically she strives to inspire them to travel outside the village when they are older and aspire to attending secondary schools in the town.

Mandisa's main values relate to providing the physical and emotional support to learners that she knows many fail to get from their homes. While Mandisa and Cecilia are not local to their schools, nor do they live in the school community, the local poverty reminds them of their own upbringings and how their own teachers supported them. Their values as teachers centre around providing similar support for their pupils – particularly those that are especially bright or especially poor.

Another theme related to rurality that shapes the teachers' values is their understanding of the relationship that pupils have with their parents, and in particular, the value parents' place on education:

'In town maybe the parents can be understanding and they can give the children more information but here in our situation that is not so. So the parents cannot understand or are not interested in looking into the details of the education the children are getting. So they leave everything to the teachers.' (Cecilia)

Ruth's value of ensuring cleanliness and neatness relates to the lower value she perceives the parents place on these, and she is aware this a particularly rural issue:

'Neatness is a problem. They go home, and the parents don't make them wash, or the parents are not in the house and there is no water anyway, so they wear the uniforms the whole week and when they come to the school they will be visiting the lavatory and will dirty themselves. So the whole classroom is smelling bad. So I try to encourage them to be hygienic.' (Ruth)

The personal connection that some of the teachers have with the local community plays an important role in influencing what they value in their work. The professional role valued most strongly by Habibah relates to her relationship with the pupils she teaches. Her priorities are influenced by the affectionate and mutually supportive relationship she has with the community. She was asked if living in the village affected how she saw her role:

'Yes of course. If I was living far away they would not know much of me. I am bringing up these children the way they should be, to the best of my knowledge,

and this is very valued by the people here. I know their families so I know what background they have and what they want from me.' (Habibah)

Because Habibah and Sabeera teach in their own communities, not only do they have a personal incentive to value the affective aspects of teaching because they are teaching the children of their friends, they also have a reputation to uphold. Conversely, Agnes teaches at the same school as Habibah but does not live in Gadanán nor is she a Hausa speaker or a Muslim:

'I don't know nothing about them much... because I'm not living there... but I just teach them like I would any children, the teaching aspect is still the same.' (Agnes)

Agnes's isolation from the community means she places a greater value on the non-affective aspects of teaching: punctuality, control and neatness. Other teachers who do not have a personal connection to the community appear to invest less emotionally in the pursuit of their values. Nomfundo appreciates how the resources and facilities of the nearby town increase what she is able to offer her pupils, but she does not engage emotionally in the pupils' decisions to take up these opportunities. Ruth feels more and more that as a teacher she needs to encourage her pupils to have aspirations that extend beyond salt-production and farming but has little emotional attachment to them or the community and 'definitely would not be sad to leave Nkyen'. Her isolation from the community and their hostility towards the teachers legitimises the higher importance she places on other values, for example, her own professional development.

Relationships with education officials appear important too. While the teachers reported that they felt well-informed in terms of education policy, most of the teachers expressed a feeling of disconnection from education officials:

'There's a great difference, in a town, government always have eyes there, more than they do here. The governors see these schools often so they can see, "ah look this needs doing" and so on but since they are not here I just pray to God and carry on.' (Agnes)

'We are able [to study during school hours] because in a term the supervisors will only come maybe once. You need more than that though to help you know you are doing the right thing, otherwise you drift, you lose focus.' (Ruth)

Limited contact with officials appears to influence the teachers' professional values in different ways. For Agnes it appears to provoke a sense of inertia. Her perceived lack of guidance or inspiration maintains her deep-rooted view of what teachers do – her values remain static and focused on the aspects of teaching she knows she can do well (time-keeping and control). Other teachers interpret the lack of support from the district office as an invitation to be autonomous. The lack of official contact at Nkyen frees Ruth from her job and enables her to prioritise values related to her professional development. Mandisa and Nomfundo feel able run the school in a way they feel is more appropriate. None of these scenarios facilitates harmony between teacher and official values.



### **5.3.3 Motherhood**

The teachers' personal lives influence what they value professionally in several ways but the most important aspect of this appears to be their role as mothers. In the official documents, teachers are mostly presented as gender neutral and there is little acknowledgement of their lives outside of the classroom (except when it impacts negatively on their work). Yet for the teachers in this study, teaching is possible as a career because it complements and fits in around their primary roles as wives and mothers. It is important, therefore, to explore the different ways in which motherhood influences the teachers' professional values.

For some of the teachers motherhood influences the value they place on the affective side of teaching. The fine line Habibah draws between teaching and parenting and the transferable skills she brings to her job after twenty years of motherhood have a strong influence on what she values in her professional duties:

'So it is the affection I have for them and the interest I have in them that makes me a good teacher.' (Habibah)

Becoming a mother changed the way Cecilia saw her pupils:

'Actually [motherhood] has made me to understand children more, children are very tender. When I see them doing something like misbehaving I realise it's just childhood, not indiscipline. They are so young they have not come to a time of understanding yet. So I am softer with them.' (Cecilia)

'I used to see children losing a pencil and I could not understand why the pencil is getting lost, they know they are supposed to look after them, but now [my son] loses pencils on a daily basis! But it's not carelessness, he does not know the value of the pencil, they move outside and forget very fast, they leave it on the table, they put it down, it is forgotten. They just have not come to an understanding yet of what these things mean, and how valuable things are. So having him has made me more tolerant in the classroom.' (Cecilia)

In relation to this Cecilia believes that becoming a mother has enhanced her understanding of the support children need to succeed academically. In turn this has increased her awareness that for many of the pupils at Kijani this support is not found at home. She feels that because her own son is so lucky to have two educated parents who invest time in his education she owes it to the community to support her pupils in a similar way. This is why she set up the farm inside her classroom to offer extra-curricular farming lessons to her pupils and why she runs extra classes for the less able pupils (see cameo 1).

Punctuality was a highly valued aspect of teaching across the five sites, but it appeared to be valued less by those who had young children at home. Getting her younger children ready for school means Habibah often arrives after the first bell and this influences the amount of empathy she has for other mothers. As head of the nursery section (which she was at the time of the second field visit in 2011), it is Habibah's role to ensure the nursery teachers are on site during school hours. Habibah clashes with the local education coordinator on this issue.

'... say teachers come late and I don't take much action and he says "why did you do this?" and I have to say "look these are married women and they have children, some days they have to take their children to the hospital for immunisation, can I stop a mother from doing that?" You can't! So you see, women have these priorities and I have to deal with that in my job. Or a woman is pregnant and she is at the antenatal clinic – can you stop her? You can't stop her! So you see there are bound to be some problems in a school with a lot of women. You just have to accept it. If you say to the women stop it, stop going to antenatal clinic in school time, because it is school time... stop taking your child to whatever she will not stop it! She would rather leave her job and we need them to stay... I have children too and I understand that there are times when they come first.' (Habibah)

The high value Habibah places on her professional development stems partly from her family role too. She is keen to demonstrate that she is more than a wife and mother and wants them to see her as an equal:

'I have three children who are graduates, I have three more who are undergraduates and the last three all say they want to go to university too! So I don't do it because of the money, I do it because mummy wants to be knowledgeable too! That is why I got into the university.' (Habibah)

However, the competing demands on the teachers' time that being a wife and mother in a rural community ensure means that the teachers' place little value on informal professional development:

'We could discuss these things at break time but there's only 30 minutes before the time is up, most of us are mothers so we have a lot of things at our homes to do, some go to bring their children home from school, some go to prepare food to eat or for their families to eat... so there really isn't time to discuss these things, you just go to your class and teach and try to find time to share these ideas during school hours.' (Habibah)

'...well we save [discussing teaching methods] for the classes, so I don't discuss with the teachers here but with those at the centre. Here we are always rushing home to cook.' (Sabeera)

#### **5.3.4 Religion**

All of the teachers except Nomfundo were practising Christians or Muslims. Religion has a significant influence on the teachers' professional values. This is most notable in the data from Sudan where Sabeera feels that teaching is the most valuable profession for a Muslim. Sabeera – like more than half of teachers studying at the Open University of Sudan – chose Arabic and Islamic studies as her major subject. Her most valued functioning is to guide her pupils to be better Muslims and all of her other professional values adhere to Islamic principles.

For the other teachers, working in countries where religion and the education system are constitutionally separate, religious beliefs have a less encompassing but still significant influence on their professional values. First teaching is seen as a noble and honourable profession and this motivates the teachers to do their best: achievement for their pupils is seen as achievement for God:

‘I work hard because whatever you do is between you and your God. As long as I am doing my work that is between me and my God.’ (Agnes)

There is also a sense that God has the final say over what they do in their work – ultimately they are working for God rather than the education system and their professional goals are guided by, and facilitated by, God’s influence:

‘God called me to be a teacher so it is because of that that I am here... In ten years, I am not sure if I will still be at Kijani... only God now can tell. If that is what He wants then I will be here.’ (Cecilia)

‘There is nobody [supporting me], there’s only Almighty God. So if God wants me to get a promotion that is what I will do, I am just waiting to hear from Him on that one.’ (Agnes)

[where do you see yourself in five years time?] ‘Well, if God spares my life, that is what is most important, I think I will have graduated and I will be ripe for retirement [laughs] so I will be taking care of my children, and God willing I will continue with a master’s and then a PhD. But if this is not in God’s plan then I will be doing something else.’ (Habibah)

The most significant example of how religious beliefs influence teachers’ values was captured in the second field visit to Nigeria in 2011. Two days before the fieldwork was due to start the head teacher’s husband died. The head teacher was confined to her house for official mourning, as is tradition, and the school limped along without her. Many

teachers were absent, lessons started late or were cancelled and teachers crowded three classes into one room to reduce workloads. The teachers spent much of their time at the head teacher's house praying with the family. Religious norms and expectations meant that their professional values were put on hold.

## 5.4 Teacher-generated professional capabilities and functionings

This chapter has shown what is valued in the seven teachers' work from their own perspectives and has provided explanations of how personal, social and cultural aspects of their lives influence these values.

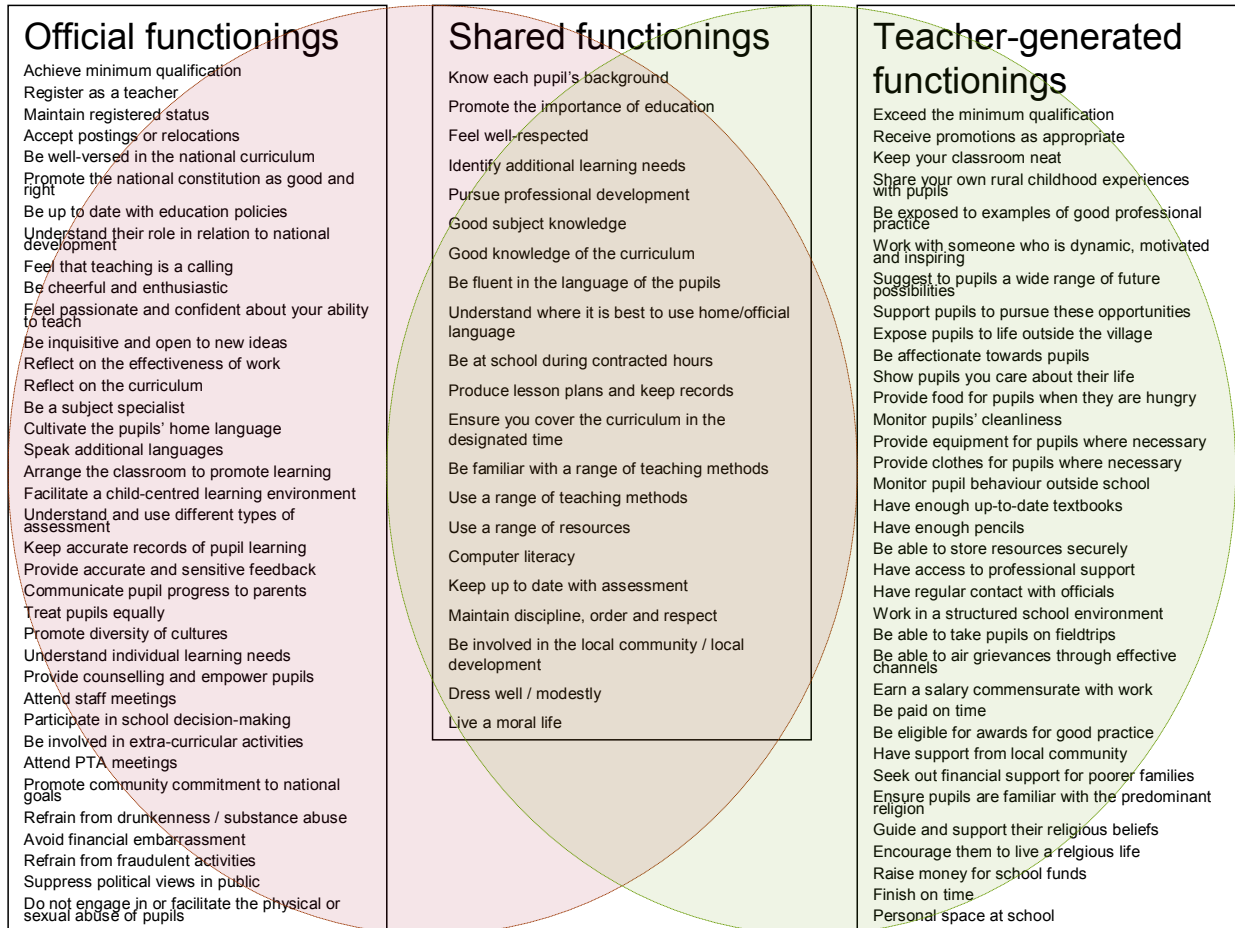
Table 5.2 shows the list of teacher-generated professional capabilities and functionings derived from the data in this study. To construct this list the valued objectives of the seven teachers above were integrated into the broader data set that includes the field-notes, focus group and questionnaire data to create an expanded list of valued professional functionings for teachers. As in chapter 4 the functionings have been clustered into groups. In this list, each group represents a substantive freedom (or professional capability) that teachers expect to be able to pursue in their work.

<b>Teacher-generated capability</b>	<b>Teacher-generated functionings</b>
Professional Development	Attend professional development courses
	Exceed the level of the minimum qualification
	Receive promotions as appropriate
Being a role model	Be punctual
	Dress well
	Live a moral life
	Keep your classroom neat
	Share your own rural childhood experiences with the pupils
Having a role	Be exposed to examples of good professional practice

model	Work with someone who is dynamic, motivated and inspiring
Inspiration	Suggest to pupils a wide range of future possibilities (academic or otherwise)
	Support pupils to pursue these opportunities
	Emphasise the importance of education
	Expose pupils to life outside the village
Love and nurturing	Be affectionate towards pupils
	Show pupils you care about their life
	Know each pupils' background
Parenting	Provide food for pupils when they are hungry
	Monitor pupils' cleanliness
	Provide equipment (e.g. pencils) for pupils where necessary
	Provide clothes for pupils where necessary
	Monitoring pupil behaviour outside school
Planning	Have a clear knowledge of the curriculum
	Revise the lesson material (refresh knowledge)
	Prepare a plan for every lesson
	Ensure you cover the curriculum in the designated time.
	Keep a record of lessons
Pedagogy and resources	Use a range of different teaching approaches
	Use a range of different learning resources
	Be computer literate
	Have enough up-to-date text books
	Have enough pencils
	Be able to store resources securely
	Be able to take the pupils on fieldtrips
Assessment	Keep up to date with marking in exercise books
Support and encouragement	Have access to professional support
	Have regular contact and a respectful relationship with education officials
	Work in a structured school environment
	Be able to air their grievances through effective channels
	Earn a salary commensurate with their work
	Be paid on time
	Be eligible for awards for good practice
	Have support from the local community
Be able to feel that teaching is a well-respected profession	
Social work	Make the school a community hub
	Tell parents about the importance of education
	Involve parents in school life
	Be involved in community issues
	Be involved in family issues
	Seek out financial support for poorer families
Language	Understand the language levels of the pupils and teach to ensure maximum understanding
Discipline	Maintain order and respect
Religious guidance	Ensure pupils are familiar with the basics of the predominant religion
	Guide and support them in their religious beliefs
	Demonstrate your religious beliefs through your work
Fundraising	Raise money for school funds
Work/life balance	Finish on time
	Personal space at school

**Table 5.2 Teacher-generated professional capabilities and functionings**

This section now explores the differences and similarities between the teacher-generated and official lists. Figure 5.1 represents this diagrammatically:



**Figure 5.1 A comparison of official and teacher-generated functionings**

One key feature of the national documents that is shared by the teachers is that teaching is a worthy and admirable profession. All of them are proud to be teachers – although this pride is a complex emotion. While they are aware that teachers have low status nationally, this does little to dampen their self-esteem and personal satisfaction regarding the work they do in their schools and classrooms. This is backed up by data from the questionnaires. In the second stage of fieldwork the questionnaire asked teachers to rank



how proud they were to be a teacher in their country on a scale from 1-5. Over three quarters of respondents ranked themselves as 1 or 2. It also asked them to rank how proud they were to be a teacher in their community. Four fifths of respondents ranked themselves between 3-5.

Cecilia's narratives reflect those of all seven focus teachers here: 'Actually it's not very well respected...teaching used to be highly valued but now...even the children you are teaching, they don't want to be teachers'. Yet she also spoke regularly of how proud she was of her profession:

'Yeah it's such a noble profession', 'I am proud to be a teacher, even though there are difficulties...', 'I am still happy because of being a teacher... for me teaching is such a noble job, it comes from the heart and it is a really special role to play when you can help these kids'.

This suggests that even though teachers and officials have different values in terms of teachers' work, the most basic element of teaching – helping pupils to achieve – is shared by the official and teacher perspectives. However, the teacher data offers further insights. For the teachers in this study, pupil achievement does not necessarily have to be academic – the teachers draw on their understandings of what is possible for each child (and if they are not academic, helping them to develop other skills) and work towards the pursuit of that instead.

Other similarities draw on the more basic elements of teaching, for example subject knowledge, communication and using a range of teaching strategies and resources. Both the official and teacher-generated lists include good time-keeping, being of good moral

character and dressing well. They both also include the aspirational functioning of computer literacy despite the teachers working in schools without electricity and the official data accepting that this is likely to be the case.

While the official documents imply that the challenges of teaching – particularly in rural areas - put teachers off the profession and de-motivate them, the teacher data suggests that these challenges can actually inspire them and shape their values. Similarly the influences of the teachers' roles as mothers are critical in the formulation of their professional values that develop from these challenges. Yet love and affection for children does not emerge as a valued functioning for teachers in the official documents or views. The increasing professionalisation of teaching has moved away from more affective aspects of the role, yet for some of these teachers love and affection are not at odds with more structured or academic functionings, rather they complement and often underpin them. This is little recognised in the official documents.

Further differences can be identified between official and the teacher-generated capabilities and functionings. Prioritisation of capabilities is an important point. The official documents and the views of the education officials present valued aspects of teaching as a neutrally ranked list. The implication is that the more functionings a teacher can achieve, the higher their professional capability and the better a teacher they are. The data from the teachers, however, shows that each teacher has a clear sense of one or two priorities that dominate their work. The implication from the teacher data is that without these main or dominant capabilities other aspects of teaching they value would not be possible. Habibah, for example values nurturing the children so they love and respect her and are prepared to learn from her. She does not believe that effective teaching is possible without establishing these relationships first. Agnes prioritises order, which she maintains through punctuality

and control, and believes that teaching is not possible without this because pupils 'need to know you're in charge'. Mandisa values the health and safety of her pupils above everything else; she is adamant that hungry, sick or scared children cannot learn effectively.

Another important distinction is that while the official functionings highlight what the teacher should do and be, the teacher functionings relate more to the impact their doings and beings have on their pupils. This is evident in specific terms: for example teachers having excellent language and communication skills featured strongly in the official documents. Language appears to be important to teachers too, but this is articulated as the end result of developing pupils' language skills. While the official perspectives prioritise teachers acquiring professional qualifications, the teachers articulated this as 'staying ahead of the game' and 'always being one step ahead of the pupils' - their understandings of what they needed to know reflected their perceptions of what the children knew. This distinction is also evident more generally. Three of the official capabilities relate to teachers' direct work with children. By contrast nine of the teachers' functionings acknowledge their pupils. This suggests that the official functionings start with skills and expect teachers to use them in different contexts while the teacher-generated functionings start with pupils and develop around what teachers think they know, and need.

Another difference between the two lists is the perception of the scope of a teacher's work. Chapter 4 showed how the national documents envisioned teachers as nation-builders. Even the officials (who had all trained as teachers initially) spoke of the personal role they played in national development and aligned their work with patriotic discourse. The more senior of these officials were teaching soon after independence and, as shown in chapter 2, teachers at this time were considered important stakeholders in a post-colonial nation.

This perception of teachers serving a national function is represented in three of the official capabilities.

The teacher-generated functionings, however, are more grounded in the teachers' immediate surroundings. Their values tend to be focussed around the needs of the school and community, or themselves. The teachers rarely referenced the national system they were working within. Ruth, for example, never mentioned the GES despite the GES portraying itself in the documents as valuing the membership of teachers as much as it values the membership of staff at the Ministry of Education. Others were open about where their priorities lay:

'I remember a huge fight with my lecturer over one policy that expected my learners to summarise what I had taught them in English. At that time I was teaching in rural Peddie - where you never see a white person. So our learners had never had to get the opportunity to engage with anyone speaking English. So, I made them write, because that was what worked for them. He was very angry! But I told him at that time I said, "Are you going to come and observe my classroom? You will see that this method does not work in black schools and especially in black rural schools, this method does not work at all". Hmmmm, that situation really changed how I saw my role – I was *their* teacher not just *his* student.' (Mandisa)

Similarly, while the documents suggest that poor quality teachers are bringing down the nation, the teachers in this study feel strongly that such teachers let down their pupils and the community: 'the lazy teachers here, they are why I send my daughter to school in town. These teachers are really hurting these children' (Nomfundo). The teachers did not express concern about how negative behaviours have an effect outside the local

environment, and the converse appeared also to be true. When discussing a newspaper article blaming teachers for Nigeria scoring the lowest primary school examination results in West Africa, Habibah said:

‘It has very little to do with us, the supervisors tell us about these scores and we read the articles and so on but really as long as we are doing our best for these pupils here, that is what is important... not comparing ourselves to other people.’  
(Habibah)

Sabeera is an exception to this. Her professional values are mostly inspired by her religious beliefs, beliefs that are shared with and reproduced by the wider community and the national constitution. Sabeera shares the view presented in the official documents that teachers are favoured by the prophet Muhammad. Their values are his values and, as intended by the official documents, Sabeera proclaims herself to be an ambassador of the Sudanese government and of Islam.

Other studies of rural teachers’ experiences cite rurality as a reason for teachers working ineffectively. They argue that teachers do not know what is expected of them because rural schools do not receive official documentation (Sumra, 2004). The same argument could be put forward to explain differences in official and teacher-generated functionings, but it appears that this is only partly the case. It appears that the differences in valued functionings do not just stem from a lack of awareness of what is valued officially. The teachers’ valued functionings are not ‘filling gaps’ in understandings of their work, but are considered and rooted in their perceptions of the needs of their pupils: they are valued because the teachers have genuine reason to value them and because they are genuinely understood to be ‘good’ (Sen, 1999:19). The teachers do not feel they are working

ineffectively, even when their values are different from official values. Teachers' awareness of official functionings and the choices they make regarding what they do in their work are explored further in chapter 6.

## **5.5 Chapter conclusion**

This chapter has added a list of professional capabilities and functionings for teachers – drawn from the values of teachers themselves – to the official list presented in chapter 4. While some aspects of these lists are similar, the chapter has shown the ways in which the teachers are working to a different agenda than that which is expected of them by their employers.

Two other points need mentioning here. The first is that while two lists have been compiled, there has been no attempt at this point in the thesis to rate one list above the other or to argue for a composite list of teacher functionings. Sen (2004; 2009) and Robeyns (2005b) emphasise that establishing capabilities should be a participatory endeavour involving different perspectives. They do not, however, provide guidance on how to proceed when these different perspectives are conflicting. To better understand teachers' capabilities across these different perspectives the lists will continue to be considered separately in chapter 6. Uniting the lists and the implications of this will be discussed in chapter 7.

Secondly, while providing insights into how teachers see their role, the list of teacher-generated functionings gives little insight into what the teachers actually do in their work: it is misguided to assume that just because a teacher values something they are able to

pursue and achieve it. The capability approach is concerned not just with what is valued but with the pursuit and achievement of what is valued. While this chapter has been an important part of the process of understanding teachers' professional capabilities, it is now important to understand the extent to which there is 'genuine opportunity to achieve' these capabilities (Walker, 2008:135). In order to answer the third research question, therefore, chapter 6 questions the extent to which the teachers can achieve the things that are valued (both officially and by themselves) in their work. It does this through an analysis of their agency freedom and agency achievement.

## *Cameo 5 Dismissal*

(Nkyen School, Ghana, 3<sup>rd</sup> August 2009)

**Alison: Can you tell me what happened with [the former headmaster of Nkyen]?**

Ruth: Well, we were having teacher trainees from training colleges. Every academic term we have trainees who learn at the school but also really help out with the teaching. But they will only come when the community is able to provide them with accommodation. Our policy there at that school was the school pupils will pay some amount of money and it would be used to provide accommodation for the mentees.

Then we have been doing it for two occasions, but in the third year the number of people that used to come were many more than the bedrooms and they were already sharing two rooms between eight or nine so they were complaining. So the headmaster said that what we are supposed to do is increase the fees that the pupils are supposed to pay. The PTA came together and agreed that each pupils should pay one Cedi. They started paying it and I think that some of the parents went to the office. Because nationally it is the official policy that the pupils are not supposed to pay anything for education.

So some of the parents went to the office and said that a teacher is collecting money from them. And then the office came to school and they said that is it true that you are collecting money. He told them yes, because of the teacher trainees. So this led to his sacking.

**How did you and the rest of the teachers feel?**

Well, we felt very bad. He is not taking the money for himself, it is for the mentees and these mentees when they come they help, they really help the school. So we felt really bad about the whole thing.

**How did you feel about the parents who reported him?**

Angry! They don't want the best things for their kids. It's not only you that is paying, it is the whole school, and the money will benefit the whole school too.

**What do you think their reason was for complaining?**

I think they don't want to pay the money, yes, that is it. They know that we are not supposed to collect money from them because we told them that from this time we are not even taking collection at worship. They know that but instead of coming to sort it out at the school they went and reported it.

**Did you speak to him about this?**

Well. When he was sacked we thought he was going to head another school, we did not think that he would have to be one of us, that he would be going to the classroom to teach. We felt very bad for him because it was less than four years until he was going for retirement. That's humiliating. We thought it was unfair. We thought at least there should be a final warning or something. They should not just sack him like that.



# Chapter 6 Teachers' pursuit and achievement of professional capabilities

## 6.1 Introduction

Chapters 4 and 5 explored what is valued in teachers' work from official perspectives and the perspectives of teachers. From these perspectives three lists of professional capabilities for teachers were created (table 6.1).

<b>Data source</b>	<b>List</b>
National and international documents and interviews with education officials	A list of capabilities representing the officially valued functionings for teachers <i>(referred to in the text as official capabilities and functionings)</i>
Teacher data (shadowing, interviews, focus groups, questionnaires and field-notes)	A list of capabilities representing the combined valued functionings of the focus teachers and their colleagues <i>(referred to in the text as teacher-generated capabilities and functionings)</i>
Teacher data (shadowing, interviews and field-notes)	Individual lists of valued functionings for each focus teacher drawn from their individual values <i>(referred to in the text as individual functionings)</i>

**Table 6.1 Summary of capability lists**

This chapter takes the analysis a step further in order to answer the third research question: To what extent are female teachers in rural schools able to pursue and achieve valued aspects of teaching? The focus of this chapter is teacher agency, where agency is 'the ability to pursue goals that one values and has reason to value' (Sen, 1999:19). Chapters 4 and 5 articulated different 'organisational pictures' of teachers' work. Chapter 4 presented the organisational picture of the rules and valued goals around the work of teachers. Chapter 5 presented another kind of organisational picture - how teachers make sense of their work. This chapter – as Sen suggests is necessary - looks beyond these

organisational pictures to discover the lives that people manage, or do not manage to live (Sen, 2009:18).

Section 6.2 explores the teachers' agency to pursue and achieve the goals expected of them by their employers (the official capabilities) and section 6.3 explores their agency to pursue and achieve the goals they imagine collectively for themselves (the teacher-generated capabilities). Section 6.4 focuses on the teachers' pursuit of their own individual values. Section 6.5 draws the three analyses together and considers factors that limit and enhance teachers' agency to pursue and achieve valued goals in their work. Section 6.6 concludes the chapter.

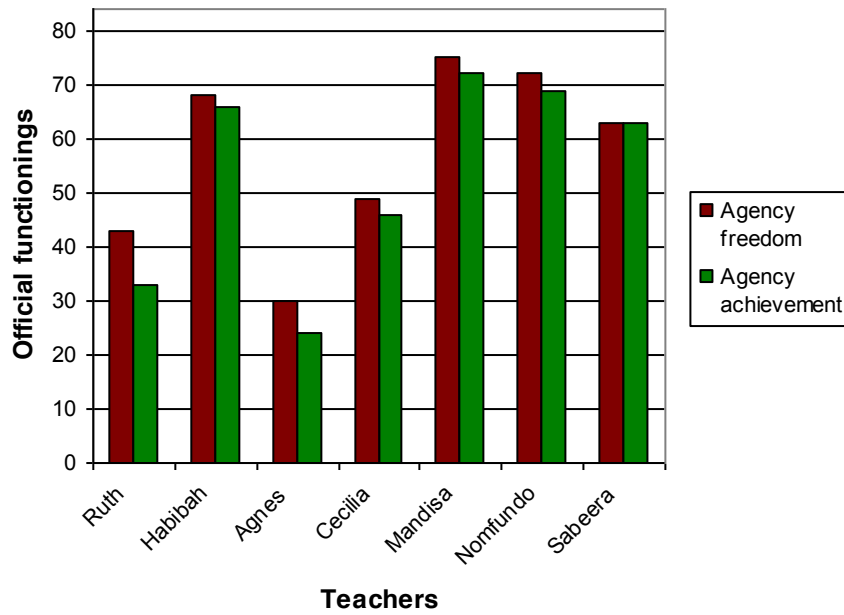
## **6.2 The pursuit and achievement of official capabilities**

This section establishes the teachers' professional capability as determined by the official list of capabilities and corresponding functionings drawn from the official documents and perspectives of education officials. It will establish the extent to which the teachers have the capability, or freedom, to be the type of teacher their employers expect them to be.

Chapter 4 identified 14 capabilities and 84 functionings from the official data. Using the framework outlined in chapter 3, these 84 functionings translate into 84 questions for agency freedom and 84 questions for agency achievement. Each teacher was allocated a score to indicate if they are free to pursue these functionings and a score to determine their achievement of the functionings - each out of a possible 84 points. Some possible outcomes are listed below:

- If a teacher scores 84 points for agency freedom it suggests that they have the capability to pursue all of the functionings expected of them as teachers. This means they are not restricted in any way to be the sort of teacher their employer expects them to be.
- If they also score 84 points for agency achievement it suggests that not only are they free to pursue these functionings, they choose to do so. This would suggest that they are working in a way the official documents imply the ideal teacher should.
- If they do not score 84 points for agency freedom it suggests that there are officially valued areas of their job that they do not have capability to pursue.
- If their agency achievement score is lower than their agency freedom score it suggests that while they are free to pursue certain functionings they have made a choice not to do so.

Figure 6.1 shows an aggregate summary of the teachers' freedom to pursue, and their actual achievement of, the official functionings. It would be difficult to envisage any teacher recording a maximum score and, as the analysis shows, none of the teachers have complete freedom to do their job in the ways that are expected of them.



**Figure 6.1 Aggregate scores for agency freedom and agency achievement of official functionings**

The rest of this section explores the teachers' pursuit and achievement of official professional capabilities and functionings.

*Ruth (Ghana)*

<b>Ruth</b>				
<b>Official capability (OC)</b>	<b>Maximum possible Score</b>	<b>Actual score Agency Freedom</b>	<b>Actual score Agency Achievement</b>	<b>Grey areas</b>
1. Recognition	3	3	2	
2. Loyalty	7	4	2	
3. Respect	6	2	2	
4. Vocation	4	2	2	
5. Reflection and professional development	4	4	4	
6. Subject knowledge	3	1	1	1
7. Language	4	1	1	2
8. Personal management	6	4	2	1
9. Pedagogy and resources	6	2	1	
10. Assessment and feedback	6	1	0	
11. Pupil respect	6	1	1	
12. Pastoral care	10	5	5	1
13. Relationships	9	3	2	
14. Behaviour	10	10	8	
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>84</b>	<b>43</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>(5)</b>

**Table 6.2 Ruth's agency freedom and achievement of official capabilities and functionings**

Ruth scored a comparatively low score for agency. Analysis of her data also revealed the widest gap between agency and achievement which suggests that she chooses not to achieve functionings she can genuinely pursue more regularly than the other teachers<sup>61</sup>. A key capability in which Ruth's agency is limited is 'relationships': she can pursue 3 functionings out of a possible 9. Additionally, participation in extra-curricular activities is a functioning within this capability that she could pursue but chooses not to. Her main reason for this – which is her main reason for not choosing to pursue most functionings she genuinely could achieve – is because her main priority is her diploma.

<sup>61</sup> It is important to re-emphasise here that by the second stage of fieldwork Ruth had moved to a school in town where conditions enhanced her capability to achieve the official functionings quite considerably. Crucially too, the level of supervision of teachers in the second school provided fewer opportunities for Ruth to choose not to achieve functionings she was genuinely able to pursue. Because this PhD focuses on rural schools the analysis drew on Ruth's experiences at Nkyen, but the data from the second field visit is useful to enable comparisons between the schools.

Overall Ruth has agency freedom to pursue capabilities of 'reflection and professional development' and 'behaviour'. Of these she prioritises the first.

*Habibah (Nigeria)*

<b>Habibah</b>				
<b>Official capability (OC)</b>	<b>Maximum possible Score</b>	<b>Actual score Agency Freedom</b>	<b>Actual score Agency Achievement</b>	<b>Grey areas</b>
1. Recognition	3	3	3	
2. Loyalty	7	5	4	1
3. Respect	6	4	4	
4. Vocation	4	4	4	
5. Reflection and professional development	4	4	4	
6. Subject knowledge	3	3	3	
7. Language	4	4	4	
8. Personal management	6	5	5	1
9. Pedagogy and resources	6	4	4	
10. Assessment and feedback	6	5	5	
11. Pupil respect	6	4	4	
12. Pastoral care	10	5	5	
13. Relationships	9	7	7	
14. Behaviour	10	10	9	
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>84</b>	<b>67</b>	<b>65</b>	<b>(2)</b>

**Table 6.3 Habibah's agency freedom and achievement of official capabilities and functionings**

Habibah scored comparatively highly in terms of agency freedom and achievement and this appears to be due to her relationship with the community in which she works as well as her experiences studying for her degree. Her understanding of different teaching and assessment strategies, for example, were more advanced during the second field visit. This increased her agency to pursue and achieve functionings within the capabilities of 'pedagogy and resources' and 'assessment and feedback'.

Overall Habibah has genuine access to six capabilities. She chooses to pursue five of these: 'recognition', 'vocation', 'reflection and professional development', 'subject knowledge' and 'language'. She doesn't fully achieve the capability of 'behaviour' because,

despite living a short walk from the school, family commitments mean she often arrives after the first bell.

*Agnes (Nigeria)*

<b>Agnes</b>				
<b>Official capability (OC)</b>	<b>Maximum possible Score</b>	<b>Actual score Agency Freedom</b>	<b>Actual score Agency Achievement</b>	<b>Grey areas</b>
1. Recognition	3	3	3	
2. Loyalty	7	2	0	
3. Respect	6	2	2	
4. Vocation	4	3	3	
5. Reflection and professional development	4	1	1	
6. Subject knowledge	3	1	1	
7. Language	4	2	0	
8. Personal management	6	2	1	
9. Pedagogy and resources	6	1	1	
10. Assessment and feedback	6	1	1	
11. Pupil respect	6	1	1	
12. Pastoral care	10	0	0	
13. Relationships	9	2	2	
14. Behaviour	10	9	7	1
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>84</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>(1)</b>

**Table 6.4 Agnes's agency freedom and achievement of official capabilities and functionings**

Agnes scored the lowest number of points for both agency freedom and achievement. Scoring just 30 points for agency freedom suggests that she can only pursue just over a third of what is expected of her as a teacher. She has received little training or professional development (and cannot afford to pay for this privately) since she trained to be a teacher over twenty years ago and is unable to pursue functionings in capabilities such as 'subject knowledge', 'pedagogy and resources' and 'assessment and feedback'.

Agnes chooses not to pursue functionings within the capability of 'language'. Having taught in the region for over 20 years it would be reasonable to argue that she could learn Hausa in order to teach in the language of instruction and communicate with the pupils in

their home language – not doing so has been a decision based on her desire to return to her home state.

Analysis of Agnes’s data also raised the fewest uncertainties – the only ‘grey area’ was in relation to her ability to ‘refrain from any activity that impacts negatively on teaching’: the data suggests that her aggressive manner with the pupils does impact negatively on her teaching although this was a tentative conclusion.

Overall Agnes has the agency freedom to pursue, and achieves, just one capability: ‘recognition’ – one that all of the teachers were able to pursue and achieve.

*Cecilia (Kenya)*

<b>Cecilia</b>				
<b>Official capability (OC)</b>	<b>Maximum possible Score</b>	<b>Actual score Agency Freedom</b>	<b>Actual score Agency Achievement</b>	<b>Grey areas</b>
1. Recognition	3	3	3	
2. Loyalty	7	3	3	
3. Respect	6	3	3	
4. Vocation	4	4	4	
5. Reflection and professional development	4	1	1	2
6. Subject knowledge	3	1	1	
7. Language	4	3	3	
8. Personal management	6	4	4	
9. Pedagogy and resources	6	0	0	
10. Assessment and feedback	6	2	1	
11. Pupil respect	6	5	5	
12. Pastoral care	10	4	4	1
13. Relationships	9	5	3	
14. Behaviour	10	10	10	
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>84</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>(3)</b>

**Table 6.5 Cecilia’s agency freedom and achievement of official capabilities and functionings**

Cecilia has agency freedom to achieve just over half of the functionings expected of her. Like all of the teachers she scores very highly in the capability of ‘behaviour’ – like all of



the teachers the functionings contained within this capability (for example dress, punctuality, and various ways of being a role model) appear to represent the core aspects of being a teacher. These functionings appear to be most accessible to the teachers because they can pursue them without requiring external assistance. Cecilia scored a low score for the capability of 'pedagogy and resources'. While she is aware that she could use a wider range of approaches in her teaching she feels she needs more training to do so and she feels especially over-burdened with her class of over 60 pupils in a room designed for 30. During the first field visit when Cecilia was running her small extra-curricula classroom farm she spoke keenly about the importance of the pupils learning by doing. In her lessons though she sticks rigidly to the curriculum to ensure all of the content is covered in the allocated time. She feels that changing her teaching style or using different approaches would work against this timetable.

Overall Cecilia is free to pursue capabilities of 'recognition', 'vocation' and 'behaviour' and she chooses to pursue all three of these.

*Mandisa (South Africa)*

<b>Mandisa</b>				
<b>Official capability (OC)</b>	<b>Maximum possible Score</b>	<b>Actual score Agency Freedom</b>	<b>Actual score Agency Achievement</b>	<b>Grey areas</b>
1. Recognition	3	3	3	
2. Loyalty	7	4	1	2
3. Respect	6	5	5	
4. Vocation	4	4	4	
5. Reflection and professional development	4	3	3	1
6. Subject knowledge	3	3	3	
7. Language	4	4	4	
8. Personal management	6	4	4	2
9. Pedagogy and resources	6	5	5	
10. Assessment and feedback	6	6	6	
11. Pupil respect	6	6	6	
12. Pastoral care	10	9	9	
13. Relationships	9	8	8	
14. Behaviour	10	10	10	
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>84</b>	<b>74</b>	<b>71</b>	<b>(5)</b>

**Table 6.6 Mandisa's agency freedom and achievement of official capabilities and functionings**

Mandisa scored highest for agency. There is no area in which she appears to be particularly limited in her freedom to pursue official capabilities and the functionings she is not able to pursue are common to all teachers, for example, not feeling respected by the media, not being able to promote the national constitution in school or not promoting community commitment to national goals. There were two grey areas recorded within the capability of 'personal management': because by the second field visit Mandisa had cut down her teaching hours to devote more attention to school management and it was not possible to collect as much data as the other teachers on her freedom to write and stick to lesson plans.

One functioning Mandisa was adamant that she would refuse even though she was technically free to accept was relocation to a different school: a functioning within the capability of 'loyalty'. Her investment in Isibane has been so great and her plan for its

future extends up until her retirement: her primary loyalties lie with the school rather than with her employers as the official capability implies they should.

Overall Mandisa has agency freedom to pursue to seven official capabilities ('recognition', 'vocation', 'subject knowledge', 'language', 'assessment and feedback', 'pupil respect' and 'behaviour') and she chooses to achieve all of them.

*Nomfundo (South Africa)*

<b>Nomfundo</b>				
<b>Official capability (OC)</b>	<b>Maximum possible Score</b>	<b>Actual score Agency Freedom</b>	<b>Actual score Agency Achievement</b>	<b>Grey areas</b>
1. Recognition	3	3	3	
2. Loyalty	7	4	4	
3. Respect	6	3	3	
4. Vocation	4	4	4	
5. Reflection and professional development	4	3	3	1
6. Subject knowledge	3	2	2	
7. Language	4	4	4	
8. Personal management	6	5	5	
9. Pedagogy and resources	6	5	5	
10. Assessment and feedback	6	6	5	
11. Pupil respect	6	4	4	2
12. Pastoral care	10	9	9	
13. Relationships	9	8	6	
14. Behaviour	10	10	10	
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>84</b>	<b>70</b>	<b>67</b>	<b>(3)</b>

**Table 6.7 Nomfundo's agency freedom and achievement of official capabilities and functionings**

Nomfundo scores very highly for agency freedom and chooses to pursue the majority of the functionings she is able to. This is partly because Nomfundo and Mandisa work closely together and Nomfundo has a great deal of respect for Mandisa's teaching and management styles. Nomfundo is also very highly qualified with two bachelor's degrees and several postgraduate teaching qualifications. The grey areas listed in the capability of 'pupil respect' feature because although she is committed to adapting her teaching to suit

individual learning needs, she still feels as though she cannot do enough (and there isn't enough support) for pupils with severe learning difficulties.

Overall Nomfundo has agency freedom to pursue to five capabilities ('recognition', 'vocation', 'language', 'assessment and feedback', and 'behaviour'). She chooses to pursue all of the functionings related to these capabilities except within the capability of 'assessment and feedback' where she feels official criteria doesn't adequately represent the challenging needs of, and smaller, less rigid increments of achievement, she sees in her learners.

*Sabeera (Sudan)*

<b>Sabeera</b>				
<b>Official capability (OC)</b>	<b>Maximum possible Score (Fx)</b>	<b>Actual score Agency Freedom</b>	<b>Actual score Agency Achievement</b>	<b>Grey areas</b>
1. Recognition	3	3	3	
2. Loyalty	7	7	7	
3. Respect	6	5	5	1
4. Vocation	4	4	4	
5. Reflection and professional development	4	4	4	
6. Subject knowledge	3	1	1	
7. Language	4	4	4	
8. Personal management	6	5	5	
9. Pedagogy and resources	6	1	1	
10. Assessment and feedback	6	2	2	
11. Pupil respect	6	5	5	
12. Pastoral care	10	4	4	
13. Relationships	9	8	8	
14. Behaviour	10	10	10	
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>84</b>	<b>63</b>	<b>63</b>	<b>(1)</b>

**Table 6.8 Sabeera's agency freedom and achievement of official capabilities and functionings**

Sabeera is the only teacher who scored the same number of points for both agency and achievement. This means that everything she has agency to do she chooses to pursue.

This is reflective of her personal construct of herself as a teacher and as a good Sudanese citizen; good behaviour and doing what is expected of her by her superiors (at the school, family, community and national level) is central to her identity. Sabeera is the only teacher who knew to promote the national constitution in school (and was therefore the only teacher with agency freedom to pursue the capability of 'loyalty') – none of the other teachers were aware that this was an expectation of them.

Overall Sabeera has agency freedom to pursue to six capabilities ('recognition', 'loyalty', 'vocation', reflection and professional development', 'language' and 'behaviour') and she chooses to achieve all of these.

### *Summary of section 6.2*

Table 6.9 shows the aggregate scores for each teacher in terms of how many official capabilities they can access and how many they choose to achieve. The green squares represent where teachers scored full points for agency freedom (AF) and/or agency achievement (AA) for individual capabilities, the yellow squares represent where teachers were one functioning short of a capability and the white squares represent where teachers did not have agency to fully (or nearly) pursue or achieve capabilities. Colour-coding in this way shows, at a glance, which capabilities teachers most readily have the agency to pursue and which they then choose to pursue. 'Recognition', 'vocation', 'language and communication' and 'behaviour', for example, appear to be the most easily accessible official capabilities for the teachers to pursue and achieve. The remaining white squares suggest that most of the teachers struggle to have agency to pursue and achieve capabilities of 'loyalty', 'personal management', 'pedagogy and resources', 'pupil respect', and 'pastoral care'.

	Ruth		Habibah		Agnes		Cecilia		Mandisa		Nomfundo		Sabeera	
	AF	AA	AF	AA	AF	AA	AF	AA	AF	AA	AF	AA	AF	AA
1. Recognition	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■
2. Loyalty	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■
3. Respect	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■
4. Vocation	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■
5. Reflection and professional development	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■
6. Subject knowledge	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■
7. Language and communication	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■
8. Personal management	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■
9. Pedagogy and resources	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■
10. Assessment and feedback	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■
11. Pupil respect	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■
12. Pastoral care	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■
13. Relationships	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■
14. Behaviour	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>6</b>

**Table 6.9 Summary of teachers' agency to pursue, and achievement of official capabilities**

Patterning the data in this way suggests that none of the official capabilities appears to be completely inaccessible to all teachers: none are represented by all white squares. This is discussed further in section 6.5 and in chapters 7 and 8.

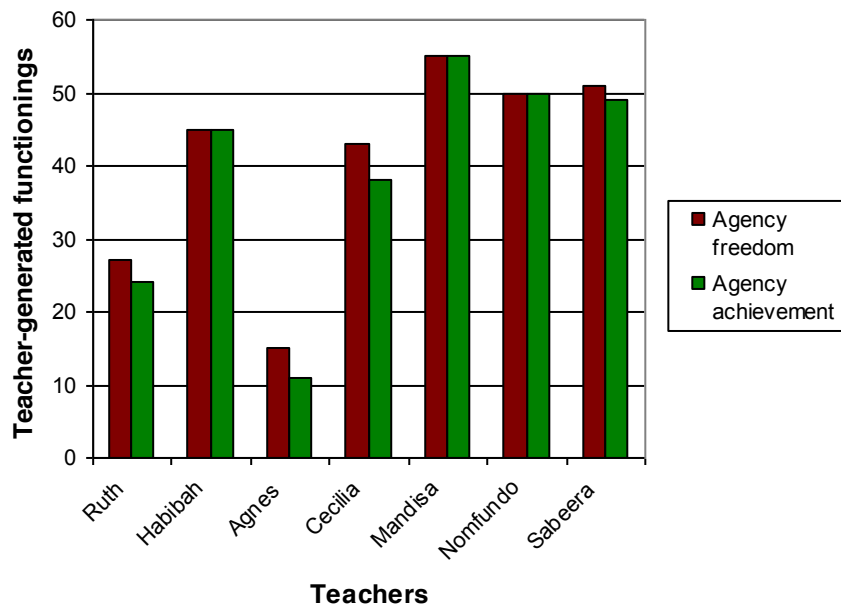
### 6.3 The pursuit and achievement of teacher-generated capabilities

This section establishes the teachers' professional capability as determined by the list of teacher-generated capabilities drawn from the empirical data presented in chapter 5. It establishes the extent to which the teachers have the freedom – or capability - to be the kind of teacher that they, collectively, value.

In total 16 capabilities and 58 functionings were extrapolated from the teacher data. These 58 functionings translate into 58 questions for agency and 58 questions for achievement. Each teacher was allocated a score to indicate their agency freedom and a score to indicate their achievement of each capability - each out of a maximum possible 58 points. Some possible outcomes are listed below:

- If a teacher scores 58 points for agency it suggests that they have the agency to pursue all of the functionings the teachers would want to achieve. This means they are not restricted in any way to be the sort of teacher they value.
- If they also score 58 points for achievement it suggests that not only are they free to pursue these functionings, they choose to do so.
- If they do not score 58 points for agency it suggests that there are things in their job that they would like to pursue but do not have the agency to do so.
- If their achievement score is lower than their agency score it suggests that while they are free to pursue certain functionings they have made a choice not to do so (this is especially important here because the list of functionings is drawn from data from all of the teachers and some teachers may feel more strongly about some functionings than others).

Figure 6.2 shows an aggregate summary of the teachers' individual scores. As in the official analysis, it shows that none of the teachers have the capability to do their job in all of the ways depicted by the teachers' collective values.



**Figure 6.2 Aggregate scores for agency freedom and achievement of teacher-generated functionalities**

This section presents each teacher's scores for agency freedom and achievement of the teacher-generated capabilities.



*Ruth (Ghana)*

<b>Ruth</b>				
<b>Teacher-generated capability (TGC)</b>	<b>Maximum possible Score</b>	<b>Actual score Agency Freedom</b>	<b>Actual score Agency Achievement</b>	<b>Grey areas</b>
1. Professional development	3	3	2	
2. Being a role model	5	4	4	
3. Having a role model	2	1	1	
4. Inspiration	4	2	2	
5. Love and nurturing	3	2	1	1
6. Parenting	5	2	2	
7. Planning	5	3	3	
8. Pedagogy and resources	7	1	0	1
9. Assessment	1	1	1	
10. Support and encouragement	9	2	2	
11. Social work	6	0	0	
12. Language	1	1	1	
13. Discipline	1	1	1	
14. Religious guidance	3	3	3	
15. Fundraising	1	0	0	
16. Work/life balance	2	1	1	
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>58</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>(2)</b>

**Table 6.10 Ruth's agency freedom and achievement of teacher-generated capabilities and functionings**

Ruth scores a proportionately lower score for agency in terms of teacher-generated functionings than official functionings (47% compared to 51%). This suggests – although both scores are comparatively low – she has more agency to pursue the goals that are valued officially than she does the goals that are valued by the teachers.

A key area in the teacher-generated capabilities where she has especially low agency is the capability of 'support and encouragement'. Nkyen is rarely visited by education officials and there is little or no support from the local community. These issues affect her agency to pursue the capability of 'social work' too. The strained relationships between the school and the parents mean that Ruth feels it would not be appropriate to engage with community issues.

An area in which Ruth is keenly aware of her lack of agency is in the capability of ‘planning’ and her ability to get through the curriculum on time. She struggles because the lack of text books and her limited teaching repertoire means she spends much of the lesson copying passages of text onto the board. Chronic pupil absenteeism means she often has to repeat lessons.

*Habibah (Nigeria)*

<b>Habibah</b>				
<b>Teacher-generated capability (TGC)</b>	<b>Maximum possible Score</b>	<b>Actual score Agency Freedom</b>	<b>Actual score Agency Achievement</b>	<b>Grey areas</b>
1. Professional development	3	3	3	
2. Being a role model	5	5	5	
3. Having a role model	2	1	1	
4. Inspiration	4	3	3	
5. Love and nurturing	3	3	3	
6. Parenting	5	5	5	
7. Planning	5	5	5	
8. Pedagogy and resources	7	1	1	
9. Assessment	1	1	1	
10. Support and encouragement	9	5	5	
11. Social work	6	6	6	
12. Language	1	1	1	
13. Discipline	1	1	1	
14. Religious guidance	3	3	3	
15. Fundraising	1	1	1	
16. Work/life balance	2	1	1	
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>58</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>(0)</b>

**Table 6.11 Habibah’s agency freedom and achievement of teacher-generated capabilities and functionings**

Habibah has freedom to pursue two thirds of the teacher-generated capabilities and chooses to pursue all that she can. Her agency freedom to achieve teacher-generated functionings is roughly the same as it is to pursue the official functionings (78% and 80%). She feels that ‘inspiration’ is an especially important capability for teachers and it frustrates her that she is unable to fully access this. She often discussed her desire to take the pupils on fieldtrips but lack of money and resources and concern for the pupils’ safety prevent it.

*Agnes (Nigeria)*

<b>Agnes</b>				
<b>Teacher-generated capability (TGC)</b>	<b>Maximum possible Score</b>	<b>Actual score Agency Freedom</b>	<b>Actual score Agency Achievement</b>	<b>Grey areas</b>
1. Professional development	3	0	0	
2. Being a role model	5	4	4	
3. Having a role model	2	0	0	
4. Inspiration	4	1	1	
5. Love and nurturing	3	3	0	
6. Parenting	5	2	2	
7. Planning	5	3	2	
8. Pedagogy and resources	7	0	0	
9. Assessment	1	1	1	
10. Support and encouragement	9	0	0	
11. Social work	6	0	0	
12. Language	1	0	0	
13. Discipline	1	0	0	
14. Religious guidance	3	1	1	
15. Fundraising	1	0	0	
16. Work/life balance	2	1	1	
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>58</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>(0)</b>

**Table 6.12 Agnes's agency freedom and achievement of teacher-generated capabilities and functionings**

Agnes is free to pursue just over a quarter of the teacher-generated functionings and, of these, she chooses to pursue three quarters.

A key issue for Agnes is a shortage of text books in the school. This means she teaches mainly from a Science book – written for pupils – that she bought from the local market ‘because I can’t be teaching off the top of my head can I?’ Agnes’s agency freedom to pursue the capability of ‘pedagogy and resources’, in both the official and teacher-generated lists, is limited.

*Cecilia (Kenya)*

<b>Cecilia</b>				
<b>Teacher-generated capability (TGC)</b>	<b>Maximum possible Score</b>	<b>Actual score Agency Freedom</b>	<b>Actual score Agency Achievement</b>	<b>Grey areas</b>
1. Professional development	3	2	2	
2. Being a role model	5	5	5	
3. Having a role model	2	2	2	
4. Inspiration	4	3	3	
5. Love and nurturing	3	3	3	
6. Parenting	5	5	5	
7. Planning	5	5	5	
8. Pedagogy and resources	7	1	1	
9. Assessment	1	1	1	
10. Support and encouragement	9	4	4	
11. Social work	6	5	0	
12. Language	1	1	1	
13. Discipline	1	1	1	
14. Religious guidance	3	3	3	
15. Fundraising	1	0	0	
16. Work/life balance	2	2	2	
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>58</b>	<b>43</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>(0)</b>

**Table 6.13 Cecilia's agency freedom and achievement of teacher-generated capabilities and functionings**

Cecilia was the only teacher to have agency to fully access the teacher-generated capability of 'work/life balance'. She was the only teacher who had her own classroom and the teachers at Kijani had a large staff room as well as a teachers' kitchen in which they met each break time to share bowls of ugali and stew cooked over the fire. None of the other teachers had their own classroom and none of the other schools had a staff room. At the South African school it had been converted into a computer laboratory and teachers would spend their breaks their classrooms or in their cars. At the Ghanaian, Nigerian and Sudanese schools, teachers would drag chairs or desks out onto the veranda at break-times and sit among the pupils.

*Mandisa (South Africa)*

<b>Mandisa</b>				
<b>Teacher-generated capability (TGC)</b>	<b>Maximum possible Score</b>	<b>Actual score Agency Freedom</b>	<b>Actual score Agency Achievement</b>	<b>Grey areas</b>
1. Professional development	3	3	3	
2. Being a role model	5	5	5	
3. Having a role model	2	2	2	
4. Inspiration	4	4	4	
5. Love and nurturing	3	3	3	
6. Parenting	5	5	5	
7. Planning	5	4	4	
8. Pedagogy and resources	7	8	8	
9. Assessment	1	0	0	1
10. Support and encouragement	9	8	8	
11. Social work	6	6	6	
12. Language	1	1	1	
13. Discipline	1	1	1	
14. Religious guidance	3	3	3	
15. Fundraising	1	1	1	
16. Work/life balance	2	1	1	
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>58</b>	<b>55</b>	<b>55</b>	

**Table 6.14 Mandisa's agency freedom and achievement of teacher-generated capabilities and functionings**

Mandisa has the most agency freedom to pursue the teacher-generated capabilities. She chooses to pursue all that are open to her. This suggests that, in the eyes of the teachers, Mandisa is working in a way that is highly valued in every aspect of her work: she has an almost full capability set when professional capabilities are teacher-generated.

*Nomfundo (South Africa)*

<b>Nomfundo</b>				
<b>Teacher-generated capability (TGC)</b>	<b>Maximum possible Score</b>	<b>Actual score Agency Freedom</b>	<b>Actual score Agency Achievement</b>	<b>Grey areas</b>
1. Professional development	3	3	3	
2. Being a role model	5	5	5	
3. Having a role model	2	2	2	
4. Inspiration	4	4	4	
5. Love and nurturing	3	3	3	
6. Parenting	5	5	5	
7. Planning	5	4	4	
8. Pedagogy and resources	7	7	7	
9. Assessment	1	1	1	
10. Support and encouragement	9	6	6	
11. Social work	6	6	6	
12. Language	1	1	1	
13. Discipline	1	1	1	
14. Religious guidance	3	0	0	3
15. Fundraising	1	1	1	
16. Work/life balance	2	1	1	
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>58</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>(3)</b>

**Table 6.15 Nomfundo's agency freedom and achievement of teacher-generated capabilities and functionings**

Nomfundo scores very highly in terms of agency freedom to pursue the teacher-generated capabilities and also scores equally for achievement: everything she is able to pursue she chooses to. Nomfundo's data scored three grey areas for the capability of 'religious guidance' because there was not enough detail in the data to robustly score this capability. She was not able to fully pursue the capability of 'planning' because the different levels of learners in her class, and the severe learning difficulties of some pupils, meant that she felt unable to work right through the curriculum. Nomfundo prioritised understanding of the curriculum over completion. She was also unable to fully pursue the capability of 'support and encouragement' because, like all of the teachers in this study, she felt that she was not paid a salary that was commensurate with her work, she was unable to air her grievances in an effective and productive way and she did not feel that teaching was a well-respected profession.

*Sabeera (Sudan)*

<b>Sabeera</b>				
<b>Teacher-generated capability (TGC)</b>	<b>Maximum possible Score</b>	<b>Actual score Agency Freedom</b>	<b>Actual score Agency Achievement</b>	<b>Grey areas</b>
1. Professional development	3	3	2	
2. Being a role model	5	5	5	
3. Having a role model	2	2	2	
4. Inspiration	4	4	3	1
5. Love and nurturing	3	3	3	
6. Parenting	5	5	5	
7. Planning	5	5	5	
8. Pedagogy and resources	7	2	2	
9. Assessment	1	1	1	
10. Support and encouragement	9	8	8	
11. Social work	6	6	6	
12. Language	1	1	1	
13. Discipline	1	1	1	
14. Religious guidance	3	3	3	
15. Fundraising	1	1	1	
16. Work/life balance	2	1	1	
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>58</b>	<b>51</b>	<b>49</b>	<b>(1)</b>

**Table 6.16 Sabeera’s agency freedom and achievement of teacher-generated capabilities and functionings**

Sabeera scored a point in the grey area column in this stage of the analysis because it was difficult to determine whether or not she was able to support pupils to achieve a range of future possibilities – a functioning within the capability of ‘inspiration’. Sabeera studied for a degree in law but always knew she was likely to move back to the village to marry and would be unable to practice law as a career. While she hoped that her (all female) pupils would be able to pursue their chosen careers she admitted that for many it would be unlikely and they too would return to the village to marry.

*Summary of section 6.3*

Table 6.17 represents an aggregate picture of the teachers’ agency freedom (AF) to pursue, and agency achievement (AA) of teacher-generated capabilities.

	Ruth		Habibah		Agnes		Cecilia		Mandisa		Nomfundo		Sabeera	
	AF	AA	AF	AA	AF	AA	AF	AA	AF	AA	AF	AA	AF	AA
1. Professional development	Green	Yellow	Green	Green			Yellow	Yellow	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Yellow
2. Being a role model	Yellow	Yellow	Green	Green	Yellow	Yellow	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green
3. Having a role model	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow			Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green
4. Inspiration			Yellow	Yellow			Yellow	Yellow	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Yellow
5. Love and nurturing	Yellow		Green	Green	Green		Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green
6. Parenting			Green	Green			Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green
7. Planning			Green	Green			Green	Green	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Green	Green
8. Pedagogy and resources									Yellow	Yellow	Green	Green		
9. Assessment	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green			Green	Green	Green	Green
10. Support and encouragement									Yellow	Yellow			Yellow	Yellow
11. Social work			Green	Green			Yellow		Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green
12. Language	Green	Green	Green	Green			Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green
13. Discipline	Green	Green	Green	Green			Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green
14. Religious guidance	Green	Green	Green	Green			Green	Green	Green	Green			Green	Green
15. Fundraising			Green	Green			Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green
16. Work/life balance	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Green	Green	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>11</b>

**Table 6.17 Summary of teachers' agency to pursue, and achievement of teacher-generated capabilities**

Immediately notable is the increased prevalence of green and yellow in the table which suggests that the teachers have comparatively more agency freedom to pursue the teacher-generated capabilities than the official capabilities. Similarities with the previous table include the apparent lack of agency freedom to pursue capabilities related to pedagogy and resources and the apparent difficulty for Agnes to pursue the majority of the capabilities generated. Another feature that stands out is the lack of colour representing the capability of 'support and encouragement'. This, and other features of the analysis, is discussed in section 6.5.



## 6.4 The pursuit and achievement of individual functionings

This section differs from the previous two because instead of the teachers' agency freedom and achievement being compared across collective lists of capabilities and functionings, they are evaluated against individual lists of functionings drawn from their own individually valued goals. This presents a less-detailed and less democratic picture of teachers' professional capabilities because it focuses on the teachers' personal and prioritised values rather than the broader set that underpins their work. It is important to add the caveat that this is not *all* the teachers value in their work (as is evident from the two previous sections). However, it is interesting to understand the extent to which the teachers are able to pursue and achieve the things that matter to them *most* in their work. It is intended that this understanding will lead to more specific insights into teacher agency and achievement, as well as into teacher motivation and morale more generally.

### *Ruth (Ghana)*

<b>Ruth</b>	<b>Functionings</b>	<b>Agency Freedom</b>	<b>Agency Achievement</b>
	Pursuing professional development	1	1
	Respecting education system hierarchy	0	0
	Inspiring pupils	0	0
	Neatness	1	1
<b>Total</b>		<b>2/4</b>	<b>2/4</b>

**Table 6.18 Ruth's agency freedom and achievement of her individual functionings**

Being neat takes considerable effort for Ruth given the lack of running water in the village. She shares a barrel of water a day with the other teachers in the hostel. She takes her clothes back to her home in the town to wash at weekends and wears her hair straight and tied tightly back to reduce the need for washing it during the week.

Inspiring the pupils is also difficult for her to pursue and achieve even though she feels it is a crucial part of her role: 'You know, most of them have never been to [the nearest town] Cape Coast'. While she tries to motivate them with stories of careers they could pursue she feels these have little effect because they have no context in which to imagine these careers 'the only other jobs they see are teachers and taxi drivers'. Ultimately all she feels she is capable of is trying to ensure they move on to secondary school where she feels their horizons might be broadened. She thinks that between a quarter and half of them will reach secondary school.

Ruth has a great deal of respect for authority and hierarchy, in theory. In reality she is frustrated and feels let down by the lack of visits to the school and feels that the teachers at Nkyen have been abandoned: 'they don't care about the teachers out here'. She works hard when they visit because she fears losing her job, but has little respect for them otherwise.

*Habibah (Nigeria)*

<b>Habibah</b>	<b>Functionings</b>	<b>Agency Freedom</b>	<b>Agency Achievement</b>
	Loving and nurturing children	1	1
	Pursuing professional development	1	1
	Embodying moral behaviour	1	1
	Planning and organisational skills	1	1
<b>Total</b>		<b>4/4</b>	<b>4/4</b>

**Table 6.19 Habibah's agency freedom and achievement of her individual functionings**

Habibah is able to pursue and achieve all of the things she values most as a teacher. This is not to say she feels she is a perfect teacher – this is why she wants to continue learning – but overall she feels she is doing everything that she needs to be doing to support her school and the community through her work.

*Agnes (Nigeria)*

<b>Agnes</b>	<b>Functionings</b>	<b>Agency Freedom</b>	<b>Agency Achievement</b>
	Punctuality	1	1
	Neatness	1	1
	Maintaining order	0	0
	Pursuing professional development	0	0
<b>Total</b>		<b>2/4</b>	<b>2/4</b>

**Table 6.20 Agnes's agency freedom and achievement of her individual functionings**

Because Agnes knows she is unlikely to be able to pursue a professional development programme she channels most of her energies into the other things she values, predominantly being on time for school and looking her best. While order is important to her and much of her time is spent chasing, shouting and threatening pupils she feels that 'rural children lack discipline' and ultimately she has little control over the pupils' behaviour.

*Cecilia (Kenya)*

<b>Cecilia</b>	<b>Functionings</b>	<b>Agency Freedom</b>	<b>Agency Achievement</b>
	Loving and nurturing children	1	1
	Inspiring pupils	1	1
	Developing pupils' skills outside curriculum	0	0
	Achieving high pupil grades	1	1
	Pursuing professional development	0	0
	Serving God through teaching	1	1
<b>Total</b>		<b>4/6</b>	<b>4/6</b>

**Table 6.21 Cecilia's agency freedom and achievement of her individual functionings**

Cecilia is mainly able to pursue and achieve her personal valued goals in her work and, in general, feels she is working as she should be. Something of particular importance to her is relating the pupils' lives to her own upbringing – she too was raised by uneducated

farmers and, with the support of her teachers, was able to finish school and attend college. She feels it is important that her pupils know and are inspired by this story. However, she is frustrated by her inability to develop the skills of those who will not complete primary school – since her class grew from 30 to 60 she is unable to continue the classroom farm which she felt was crucial in this respect. She lacks agency freedom to pursue professional development because of its cost and the birth of her second child. Ultimately, however, Cecilia feels she is teaching to serve God and as long as she does what she can, despite the constraints she faces, she is fulfilling God's will.

*Mandisa (South Africa)*

<b>Mandisa</b>	<b>Functionings</b>	<b>Agency Freedom</b>	<b>Agency Achievement</b>
	Contributing to community development	1	1
	Promote pupils' physical and psychological wellbeing	1	1
	Being autonomous	1	1
	Inspiring pupils	1	1
	Developing pupils' skills outside curriculum	1	1
<b>Total</b>		<b>5/5</b>	<b>5/5</b>

**Table 6.22 Mandisa's agency freedom and achievement of her individual functionings**

Mandisa has agency freedom to pursue everything that she personally values in her work. Like Habibah she would not claim to be a perfect teacher and she is aware that initiatives she implements do not always work as expected but in general she is able to visualise what she wants to achieve and draw on different resources, contacts and networks to make things happen:

'I take every dream seriously. I then see how I could bring it about. Once I have achieved it I call the parents and say – do you remember there was someone that said this and this and we laughed, but this and this has happened. And so in this

way people are not shy to say what their dreams are for the school, they know at the end their dreams will be integrated in the correct manner. We keep going until we get something.'

*Nomfundo (South Africa)*

<b>Nomfundo</b>	<b>Functionings</b>	<b>Agency Freedom</b>	<b>Agency Achievement</b>
	Inspiring pupils	1	1
	Developing pupils' language skills	1	1
	Developing pupils' skills outside curriculum	1	1
	Being autonomous	1	1
	Being motivated	1	1
<b>Total</b>		<b>5/5</b>	<b>5/5</b>

**Table 6.23 Nomfundo's agency freedom and achievement of her individual functionings**

Nomfundo also has the freedom to pursue and achieve the things that she values most as a teacher. Again there are areas in which she feels frustrated – for example in terms of providing the support for pupils with special needs and when pupils just do not seem to want to learn - but for the most part she feels she is working to the best of her ability and having a positive impact on the educational and personal lives of her pupils. She also feels relatively free to make decisions in her teaching based on her pupils' needs rather than on the demands of the curriculum or education policy – and she has the support of her head teacher in this respect.

*Sabeera (Sudan)*

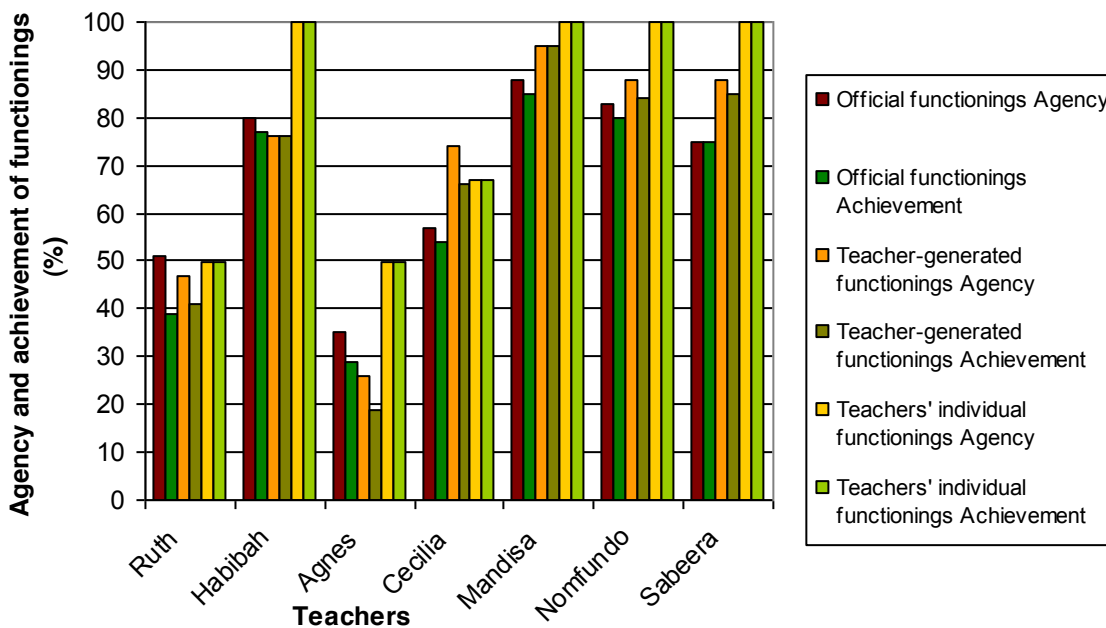
<b>Sabeera</b>	<b>Functionings</b>	<b>Agency Freedom</b>	<b>Agency Achievement</b>
	Serving Allah through teaching	1	1
	Providing religious guidance	1	1
	Respecting education system hierarchy	1	1
	Being charitable and kind	1	1
<b>Total</b>		<b>4/4</b>	<b>4/4</b>

**Table 6.24 Sabeera's agency freedom and achievement of her individual functionings**

Sabeera also feels free to pursue all that she values most in her work. She feels her personal and professional identities are inseparable; her charitable work supporting less well-off members of the community is facilitated by her role as a teacher because through the school she is better able to identify and garner support for these families. Sabeera's primary professional goal is to serve Allah through her work as a teacher and (feeling as though she is) achieving this indicates to her that she is able to achieve the other things that she values.

*Summary of sections 6.2-6.4*

Figure 6.3 combines the analyses presented in sections 6.2-6.4. It shows the teachers' agency freedom and achievement of official, teacher-generated and individual functionings expressed as a percentage.



**Figure 6.3 Teachers' agency freedom and achievement of all functionings**

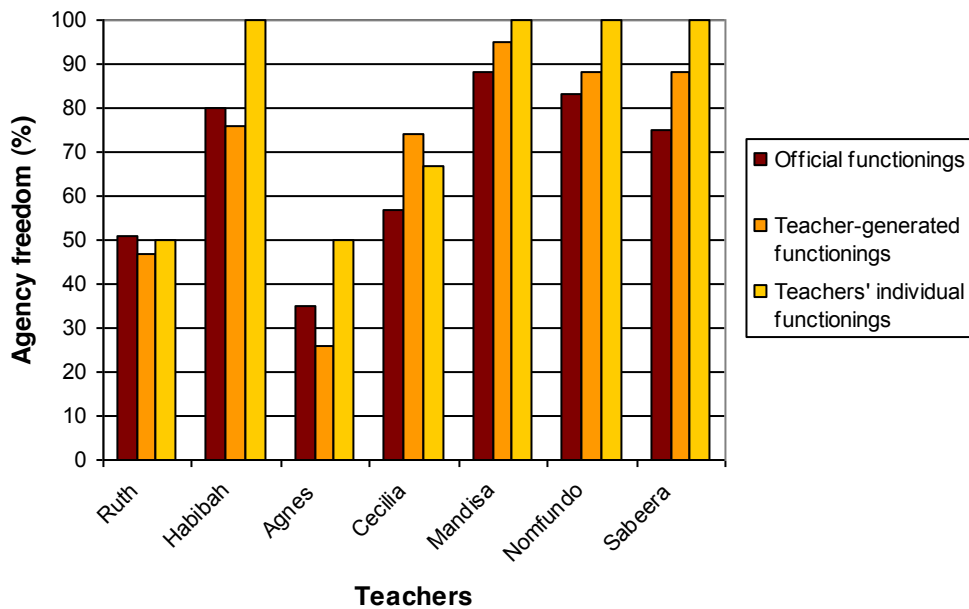
It shows that while there are differences in the teachers' agency and achievement of functionings across the three lists of functionings, in general teachers who have high levels of agency in one list do so in other lists too – and vice versa. However, almost all of the teachers are more able to pursue and achieve the things that they value than the things that are valued officially. These findings are explored further in section 6.5.

## **6.5 Understanding teachers' professional capability**

This rest of this chapter expands upon and substantiates the proxy scores for agency freedom and achievement recorded in sections 6.2–6.4. The patterning of the data achieved through the analysis is used to frame insights into teachers' professional lives. This section will explore the space between functionings and agency freedom – what I have termed the 'agency space' – that is, factors that enable and limit teachers' agency to pursue certain capabilities. It will also explore the space between agency freedom and achievement (the 'achievement space') to suggest reasons why the teachers choose not to pursue functionings they appear genuinely able to.

### ***6.5.1 The agency space***

This section shows how teachers are prevented from and enabled to pursue the things that are valued in their work. Figure 6.4 presents the teachers' agency freedom at the three levels of analysis (expressed as a percentage). It shows that the teachers tend to have more agency freedom to pursue the things that they value individually and the least agency freedom to pursue the things that are valued officially. This section explores this pattern.



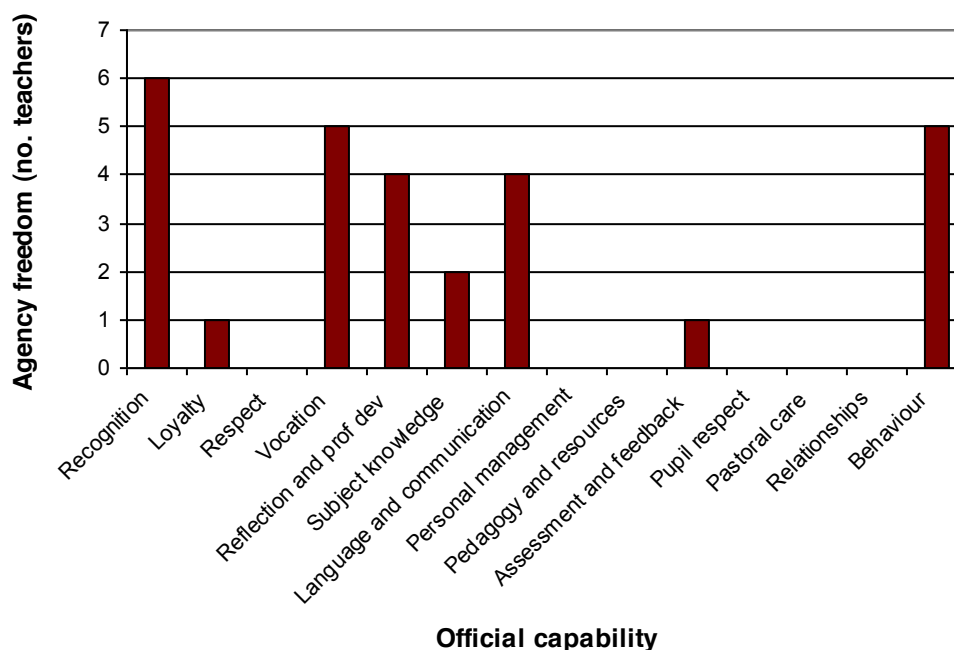
**Figure 6.4 Teachers' agency freedom**

Four of the teachers can pursue all of their individual functionings. Habibah, Mandisa, Nomfundo and Sabeera do not feel restricted in being the sort of teacher they (individually) think they should be or in pursuing the things that matter to them most as teachers. Cecilia and Agnes's agency freedom in terms of individually valued functionings is limited by their inability to pursue professional development and Ruth's by her inability to motivate the pupils to aspire to a life outside the village. Cecilia's agency is limited further by the large number of pupils in her class that prevent her from having the time and space to develop pupils' skills outside the curriculum (see cameo 1).

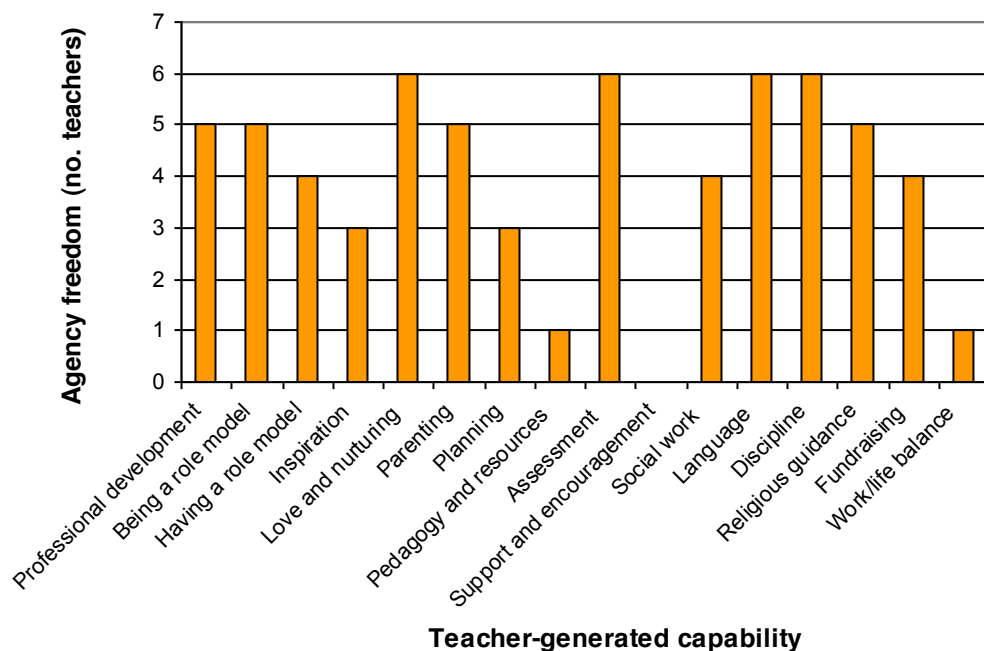
Figures 6.5 and 6.6 show the extent to which the teachers have agency freedom to pursue capabilities within the official and teacher-generated lists. In the official list the capabilities of 'recognition', 'vocation' and 'behaviour' are most accessible to the teachers. 'Loyalty', 'pedagogy and resources' and 'pupil respect' are least accessible.



Not one of the teachers, for example, can access the official capability of 'personal management'. The functioning within this capability that the teachers had least agency to pursue involved arranging the classroom in a way that is safe and promotes learning. Cecilia teaches 60 pupils in a classroom designed for 30 – pupils sit four or five to a desk and the desks stretch wall-to-wall. Agnes and Nomfundo teach upper primary classes where one teacher enters the room as another teacher leaves – there is no time to move desks around. At the Nigerian school, where several classes are often grouped together, there is no room.



**Figure 6.5 Teachers' agency freedom to pursue official capabilities**



**Figure 6.6 Teachers' agency freedom to pursue teacher-generated capabilities**

It is immediately notable from comparing figures 6.5 and 6.6 that the teachers appear to have relatively more agency freedom to pursue the capabilities that they value collectively than those that are valued officially. This section explores the teachers' agency freedom in more depth.

One of the functionings within the teacher-generated capability of 'support and encouragement' - being able to air grievances in their work through effective channels – warrants a special focus here because not only did the majority of teachers not have agency freedom to pursue it, lack of agency freedom to pursue this functioning leads to a sense of isolation and helplessness and appears to have serious knock-on effects in terms of pursuing and choosing to pursue other functionings. It prevents the teachers, for example from achieving the official capabilities of 'respect' and 'vocation'. The limitation of agency freedom stems from the fact the teachers feel that education officials lack a

genuine understanding of the conditions under which they teach and are unable to provide solutions or support because they are unable to engage with the extent of the problems:

‘...when I was at Nkyen in a term [inspectors] will only come maybe once but the circuit supervisors who really have the power will not visit at all.’ (Ruth)

‘There are kids that are aware that they are unable to absorb anything in class. I wish I could handle those kids differently. Even when they are referred to the special needs office the psychologist refuses to come to the location... So, there is no help, we are just writing these problems and writing them... when you say “I need this, I need assistance and support” nothing changes anyway.’ (Nomfundo)

While the teachers were aware that their head teacher was their first point of call when it came to reporting problems with their work, they felt head teachers were relatively powerless to effect change:

‘Well, we tell the head teacher and they send it out there. [What happens next?] No, after that nothing happens. [How does that make you feel?] Well, after some time you give up and forget about the whole thing. You have other things to focus on.’ (Ruth)

‘So, say if the work I have is too much? It is just a matter of talking to [the head teacher] and making him aware that I’m not comfortable with the conditions of that class because it is too much for me, he will go to an office and ask for a teacher. And then from there he will be told to wait. [So this has happened?] Yes! When he

goes to the office he is promised, go and wait. So he comes here and tells me the same thing: wait.' (Cecilia)

'I'm due for promotion but nobody gave me anything. So I take everything to God and I know that one day God will do it. I always tell God, this is my right and they refuse to give it to me. [Do you think you will be promoted soon?] Yeah, I believe so. I feel sure that the Lord will do it. [What about the headmistress?] She doesn't have the power.' (Agnes)

For most, speaking to the education office directly was an impossibility:

'Me? Go to the office? [laughs] You can't, you really can't. I can't go to the office and ask for teachers!' (Cecilia)

[So you don't feel that the headmistress has enough power, but you feel like you can't talk to those above her because they are too important?] 'It's true! [laughs] The office, they don't care for teachers, this is why I talk to God because I know he will answer me first.' (Agnes)

While Nomfundo and Mandisa have confidence to approach education officials, they are often disheartened by the response. Both feel that officials rarely spend enough time at schools to really understand what is best for teachers and pupils. Nomfundo, for example, felt she was stagnating as a teacher and was keen to be given a new challenge. Mandisa was unable to move Nomfundo without agreement from the local education office. The office refused because they wanted Nomfundo to use her skills with the older pupils.

Sabeera is the only teacher who feels differently. The head teacher at bab alnaher was keen to emphasise how she tried to keep communication channels open between her staff and her superiors, so any issues in the school could be dealt with at the appropriate level. Sabeera feels strongly that the supervisors always 'have time for discussion' and 'a great deal of respect for our ideas'. When asked how she dealt with issues or problems in her work she answered:

'It is subject to discussion, everything is subject to this. And it is not only on a one to one basis where the issue would be between just me and [the headmistress] because I am one teacher in a school of teachers. We discuss things in groups and find the common opinion.' (Sabeera)

She described a time when a supervisor had disagreed with the way she was teaching a topic in English. She felt that the pupils had understood the topic in one lesson but the supervisor pointed out that the topic should be taught over three lessons. With the support of the head teacher Sabeera was able to convince the supervisor that the teachers were able to make decisions like that because they 'know the pupils' backgrounds, they know what they have covered before and the speed at which they learn'. The situation was resolved because the supervisor 'respected [her] ideas' and said that she was 'free to teach her pupils how she thought best'. The head teacher said that such an exchange and result was 'normal because in school the teachers are in charge'.

This respect, even though it enabled the teachers to feel that they had more agency at the school level, appeared to limit the teachers' ability to effect change beyond this level. When asked how they would resolve a dispute with the supervisor both Sabeera and the head teacher emphasised that there would not be a dispute because 'it works both ways,

they respect our decisions in school but we also respect them and we respect the job that they do and the experience that they have'. So even though Sabeera feels that she has agency freedom to air her grievances about teaching through effective channels, the data suggests that she had not tried to (but that she would find it difficult if she did) deal with issues at the school or local level.

Sabeera's depiction of such events are related to her freedom to pursue the official capability of 'loyalty' and, in turn, related to how she feels the roles of a good citizen and a good teacher are intertwined. The data from the focus group and questionnaires from the Sudanese school suggest Sabeera's values and agency in these respects are common across the school, but very different from the values and agency of teachers from the other schools in the study. Chapter 4 showed how the Sudanese documents stood out through their focus on patriotism and Islam. The data from the Sudanese school stand out in a similar way. The teachers in the other countries saw themselves as battling against (or ignoring, or ignored by) the national education system – as 'the bottom of the pile' (Ruth) or 'the bottom of the pyramid' (Cecilia). Sabeera described herself as a key player in the education system – 'the first link in the chain' - and accepted the freedoms and limitations that this interpretation of her work ensured.

### ***6.5.2 Further limits on the agency space***

The following sections take a more thematic approach to the analysis. They highlight cross-cutting themes that impact on the teachers' agency freedom to pursue officially valued and teacher-generated functionings and capabilities.

*Teachers not knowing what is expected of them*

Chapter 2 suggested that teachers in rural schools are disadvantaged because they are less well-informed than teachers in urban schools. Chapter 5 showed that none of the teachers in this study feel ill-informed, however, the analysis suggests that a lack of information about their role prevents them from accessing official capabilities.

This conclusion is especially evident for the official capability of 'loyalty'. Loyalty is made up of functionings relating to commitment and allegiance to the national constitution and a clear understanding of the role a teacher plays in national development. Chapter 4 showed how highly this capability was regarded in the national documents – teachers as nation-builders and ambassadors of the government's education and development ideals is a dominant theme. While Sabeera scored the maximum number of 7 points in the agency column for this capability most teachers only scored 4 points and Agnes just 2. The predominant reason the teachers fail to score highly for this capability is because the data held little evidence to suggest that (other than Sabeera – as discussed above) they consider the impact of their work beyond the boundaries of the school or community in which they teach, nor awareness that anything else should be the case.

Length of service appears to have little impact on teacher agency to pursue official capabilities – or on their familiarisation with what is expected of them. The two longest-serving teachers in this study – Agnes and Mandisa – have very different levels of agency freedom. Despite teaching for over 20 years Agnes has received very little training since she qualified. Her lack of agency to pursue both the officially valued and teacher-generated functionings stems largely from a lack of awareness about what is expected of her as a teacher. As outlined in chapter 3, if a teacher is not aware of certain functionings she cannot have agency freedom to pursue these functionings.

The teachers who are undergoing, or who have recently undertaken, professional development courses have more agency freedom to pursue official functionings because they have been exposed to updated expectations of teachers. This suggests two things. First that a long history of teaching experience does not necessarily expand teachers' officially determined capabilities, especially in a rapidly changing educational environment. Secondly because of the rapidly changing nature of this environment teachers need ongoing support to learn about and adapt to these changes to maximise their agency freedom to pursue these officially valued aspects of teaching.

Not only are the teachers unaware of key functionings within the official capabilities, the data also suggests that teachers are often unable or reluctant to engage fully with new policies and guidelines:

'...some policies they come in and then we start working on them but then we are told that this policy is scrapped and we need to go back to working like before.'  
(Ruth)

'There are a lot of things being changed, always changing in schools. So we are coping, but you are always thinking, is this the right thing or did they change this thing.'  
(Cecilia)

'...maybe you are the state governor and you have your policy, you started your policy well but your tenure expires and you step down. I become the governor of the state. I will bring my own policies. I will just dump yours. So everything changes



like that and teachers don't know where they are or which policies to follow. So they just do their own thing.' (EON1/2011)

The teachers lack conviction that new policies will be enforced, or that they will be supported to enact them. They feel detached from new policies and seem not to engage with the details necessary to facilitate agency freedom. A key theme to emerge from the analysis of agency freedom in terms of the official capabilities was 'business as usual' in lieu of knowledge of or active engagement with the regularly changing rules they were expected to adhere to.

#### *Converting awareness into agency*

Awareness of what is valued, however, does not ensure agency. There are (official and teacher-generated) capabilities that the teachers are aware of but cannot access.

Chapter 2 showed that schools in Sub-Saharan Africa, particularly in rural areas, are under-resourced. The data from this study showed that resource shortages, inappropriateness of available resources, inadequate storage facilities and a lack of awareness around how resources can enhance teaching impacted negatively on the teachers' agency to pursue functionings within several official capabilities: not only 'pedagogy and resources' but also 'assessment and feedback' (because they were unable to keep and store accurate records of pupil work), 'subject knowledge' (because they were unable to further their knowledge through reading) and 'vocation' (because the lack of resources limited their ability to feel enthusiastic about their role). Resource issues limited teachers' agency freedom to pursue functionings within the teacher-generated capabilities of 'pedagogy and resources' and 'planning' for similar reasons.

The Nigerian school, for example, has a number of posters and wall-charts provided by the local and federal government. Few of these wall charts display information that is wholly correct; mistakes and inaccuracies are common. A wall chart on transport shows a satellite above the word 'Submarine'. A chart on different types of family presented a confusing illustration of an 'extended family', seemingly made up of people from all over the world.

The local government had also provided some model-making kits but these were locked in a cupboard that only the headmistress (who was on long-term leave) had access to. By contrast, no lessons observed at this school had more than one text book per class and teachers were using their own money to buy paper to make flash cards:

**Do you think [the model-making kits] were a practical thing to give the school?**

What? Do you think we can tell them what to give us? We can't. We are grateful for whatever we get.

**But would you have chosen this over...**

Of course we would prefer, I don't know, paper or charts or... other resources but we can't ask for specific things.

**Are you, as teachers, ever asked what you would need?**

They do ask... there was a time we were asked to write all we wanted in the school and we wrote a long list of exercise books and pencils and all sorts of things...

**Did you get any of these things that you asked for?**

No.

(Interview extract, Habibah)

When asked what would make them the best teacher they could be, every teacher claimed they needed more resources:

‘The only thing that would help my teaching is suitable teaching aids. If I could find more resources I would be the best teacher.’ (Sabeera)

However, when asked what they needed, the teachers’ answers were vague: few were able to list specific items or give examples of where they would use them. This suggests that while they are aware that using teaching and learning aids is expected of them - using a range of teaching and learning resources is both an official and teacher-generated functioning - they have little understanding of how these resources might enhance their teaching without complicating or adding to their task of working through the curriculum. They are aware of, and value, capabilities relating to resources, but it is not only the lack of resources in their schools that prevents them from pursuing and achieving these.

A similar finding was made around capabilities relating to pedagogy and the use of different teaching strategies. The teachers are aware of these capabilities and their corresponding functionings, and could list a range of teaching strategies, but only Nomfundo and Habibah could demonstrate evidence of their use (see cameo 6).

[How do you know how to teach?] ‘You know I have my own ideas that I could approach this like this... and then I go and do it and when I see that it’s not working or that most of the learners are not grasping then I change it around because you can use quite a number of strategies for teaching one thing. As a result I don’t go once and do this and think – ah I’ve done this one so that’s it – because I know that quite a number of them didn’t grasp it so I have to change it around.’ (Nomfundo)

This perspective is interesting to compare to Cecilia’s answer to the same question (which is also representative of Ruth’s, Agnes’s and Sabeera’s answers):

[How do you know how to teach?] 'We have to follow the syllabus, and then to conduct the syllabus we have to write what we call schemes of work so that you are able to break the topics into something that you can be able to teach until you have covered one whole term from the syllabus. And if you want to teach Mathematics tomorrow you write it down, so tomorrow you do not have any confusion, you just go ahead and teach and the next day you move on to the next topic. And the inspectors check you have covered everything and if there are no lessons lost you know you are doing it right.' (Cecilia)

These extracts suggest that some teachers prioritise comprehension of the curriculum whereas the other teachers prioritise 'getting through' it. In terms of the official capabilities teachers are expected to achieve both. The teachers in this study, however, only appear able to pursue one or the other.

'Yeah I might not cover everything in the syllabus but I would rather they move at their own pace – I think it's better to be behind in content rather than comprehension, and these kids take longer to comprehend.' (Nomfundo)

This is a very important finding because it suggests that pursuing the full list of official capabilities may be an impossible or contradictory pursuit. For the teachers in this study agency freedom to pursue some official functionings limits agency freedom to pursue others: no teachers in this study have agency to fully pursue both the official capabilities of 'personal management' and 'pedagogy and resources'.

### *Role models*

Chapter 5 showed that role models help shape the teachers' values. The analysis for this chapter suggests that the teachers who have colleagues they look up to have higher levels of agency than those who do not. Mandisa credits her first head teacher with changing her whole view about what a teacher was and could do and 'showed me how I could do the same'. Nomfundo spoke about how Mandisa's 'encouragement and support for new ideas' helped her to set up her reading classes. Habibah is inspired by the lecturers on her BEd course as well as regular discussions with her husband:

'...my husband is an educationalist, so if I have a problem that I can't solve I go to him. I say, this problem, how do you see it? And he will advise me and I can go back to my classroom and try something new.' (Habibah)

Role models appear to help teachers convert awareness into agency to pursue a range of official and teacher-generated capabilities. During her first teaching practice post Ruth's colleagues inspired her to apply for a place on the diploma programme. This enabled her to pursue the official capability of 'recognition'. Cecilia's head teacher constantly reminds staff how well the school is doing in the league tables, despite having the poorest catchment area in the district. This increases Cecilia's agency to pursue the official capability of 'vocation' by boosting her enthusiasm and confidence. For Sabeera and Nomfundo the head teachers' interaction with the community inspires and facilitates teacher-community interaction and enhances their agency to pursue the official capability of 'relationships'.

For the teachers with the lowest agency freedom scores in terms of official capabilities, the opposite is true: they have few role models and limited exposure to examples of good

practice. This is particularly evident in terms of agency to pursue capabilities of 'pedagogy and resources' and 'assessment and feedback'. Ruth is exposed to new ideas in theory at university but admits that teaching demonstrations on campus are 'artificial'. The lethargic teaching culture at Nkyen means she rarely observes new teaching strategies in real contexts.

Cameo 3, which highlights one of Agnes's Science lessons, shows that she is aware of different pedagogical approaches but struggles to put these ideas into practice. At her school there is little exposure to teaching that deviates from the norm of copying chunks of text from the single text book onto the board and asking the pupils to copy it into their books. There is also very little knowledge-sharing between the teachers. Cameo 6 shows a very different kind of lesson in the same school, but Habibah explained how teachers' commitments to their families prevented teachers sharing ideas about teaching or feedback from courses:

[If teachers go on a training course do they share their ideas with the other teachers?] 'Not really, there is very little time, like at break most of us are mothers, we have a lot of things at our homes to do, most of us go home. It is only in school hours that we could share ideas and then of course we are teaching so...'  
(Habibah)

This was re-iterated by a local education official:

'Every year the authority select teachers to go for workshops... what we are lacking is the internal workshops where this new knowledge is shared. Head teachers are not organising these so the knowledge is isolated in one teacher.' (EON2b/2011)

It is not that role-models could not be found in some schools, but that (apart from in terms of dress or punctuality) the teachers with higher levels of agency freedom often do not see themselves as (pedagogic) role-models for others, nor do they feel there is time in the school day to for skill-sharing.

### *Disruption*

Disruption impacts significantly on teachers' agency freedom – particularly in relation to the official capability of 'personal management'. Disruption – whether to individual lessons or to several days – limits the teachers' abilities to make plans with the expectation that these plans will be executed as intended. Examples of disruption occurred during every field visit: analysis of the field-notes suggests that over one third of the days spent in the five schools were not 'normal' school days.

The first field visit to Ghana in 2007 coincided with Ghana's 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Independence. This involved a day spent at a local stadium where Nkyen marched alongside other schools and where the two previous days were spent rehearsing for the march. The following week Nkyen competed in an inter-school sports event; again two days were set aside for preparations. Competitors were taken out of class for training, non-competitors were grouped together and left without a teacher. The head teacher spoke about how these events impacted on teacher planning and pupil learning:

'Actually, it disrupts classes. Because a teacher will prepare his or her scheme of work... but the work will not be completed so they feel behind. It's distracting and a sort of development for low productivity but the alternative you suggest [rehearsals

after school] would not work because there are no teachers here after 1:30pm. Me neither, so we have to rehearse during class time.’ (Head teacher, Nkyen)

At the Nigerian school, while the head teacher was absent following the death of her husband, the school day lost structure. Assembly, which was supposed to begin at 8am often didn’t start until nearly half past. When it started after 8:30am the first lesson was cut from the morning time table. On two consecutive days in one week pupils were sent home over an hour before the end of the school day, a decision made by one teacher and quickly followed by the rest. No reason for this could be found although one teacher claimed ‘the children are tired’. More commonly different streams of the same class were grouped together to save teachers having to teach. During the focus group, three weeks after term began and two weeks after the head teacher went on leave, I asked why the three streams of class 6 were still being taught together:

‘You know we have only just resumed, the numbers are still low and not stable... when they are coming in full numbers we will not join then, it’s just because the numbers are small, it is not always, you will see that they are not much in number.’  
(female teacher, Gadanan)

The class she was referring to had over 100 pupils, four or five to each desk designed for two.

In addition, during this visit the government announced on a Thursday evening that the following Tuesday would be a national holiday and, on my final day at Gadanan the local government announced that schools would be closed the following week to facilitate voting



registration for the upcoming elections. In the second field visit to South Africa in 2010 one of the main teachers' unions went on strike for three weeks.

While these examples could be described as one-off incidences, disruption emerged as a more systemic problem in the schools too. The pupil absenteeism at Nkyen meant that the teachers were regularly faced with half empty classrooms and the decision of what or even whether to teach the pupils had to be made daily and independently of their curriculum plans. Systemic disruption impacted on teachers' agency in other ways too. A poorly managed timetable combined with pupil lateness, for example, meant that Agnes never knew exactly when she would be teaching Science or how many children would be in the lesson:

'...when the pupils are coming late, by the time you get into the classroom their attention will not be exactly as you want it. Maybe by 8:30am, a period has gone and you have not yet started teaching...then you thought there would be 50 pupils but there are 90 pupils so you cannot control them.' (Agnes)

This has serious implications on Agnes's agency freedom to pursue functionings within the official capability of 'assessment and feedback' (keeping records of pupil progress, for example is near impossible) and 'pupil respect': it is clearly hard, in this situation, to tailor teaching to pupils' individual needs.

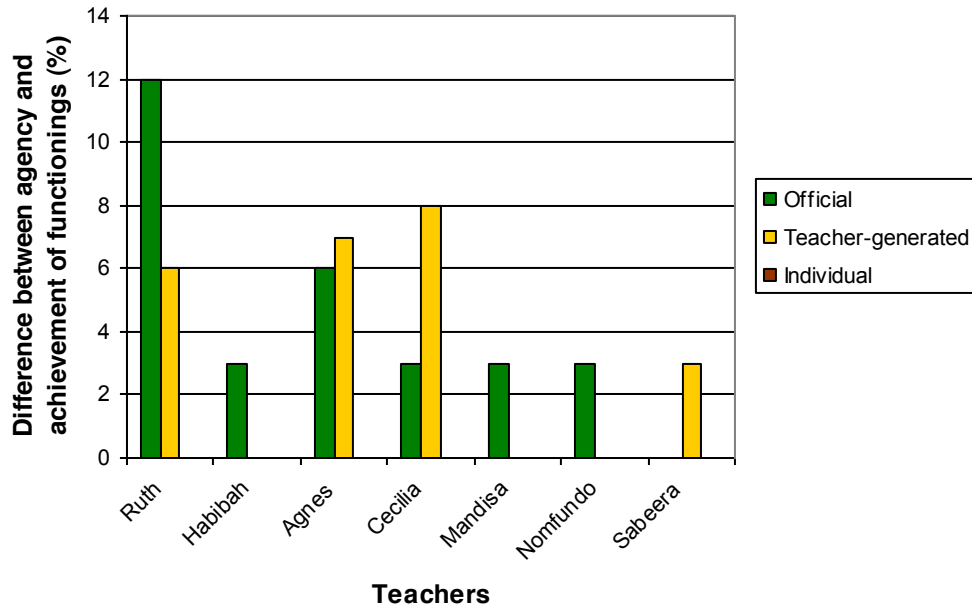
This section has shown how teachers' agency freedom can be limited or enhanced by personal, infrastructural and cultural practices in their schools, practices which are often out of the teachers' control. The next section focuses on a level of analysis in which

teachers are more in control – their decision to pursue, or not pursue, functionings for which they have agency freedom.

### ***6.5.3 The achievement space***

This section explores why, when the teachers do have the agency freedom to pursue valued functionings, they choose not to exert it. It is notable that the teachers are far more likely to lack agency than they are to choose not to act on this agency – in most areas of their work they are doing what they can. However there is also evidence that occasionally the teachers prioritise personal values over professional values, or prioritise some functionings over others. These are discussed here.

Figure 6.7 shows the differences between agency freedom and achievement for each teacher and for each of the capability lists. Each column represents the percentage difference between the number of functionings the teachers have agency freedom to achieve and the number of functionings they actually achieve. The taller the bar the more the teacher chooses not to achieve functionings that they have agency to pursue.



**Figure 6.7 The difference between agency freedom and achievement**

The data shows that – as might be expected - all of the teachers choose to pursue all of the functionings that they value individually and that they have agency to pursue (there are no brown columns shown on the bar chart because there is no difference between the scores for agency freedom and achievement in terms of individual functionings). Three of the teachers choose to pursue all of the functionings they have agency to pursue within the teacher-generated capability lists. Only Sabeera chooses to pursue all of the functionings she has agency to pursue in the official list. By focusing on some cross-cutting themes that emerged from the analysis, this section explores why teachers make these choices.

*Relationship with the community*

Three official capabilities that the teachers have agency freedom to pursue but tend to choose not to pursue functionings within them are ‘pupil respect’, ‘pastoral care’ and ‘relationships’. Relevant to all three capabilities is engagement with pupils and their

families. All of the teachers are aware that this is expected of them – and being involved in community life is also a teacher-generated functioning. While Ruth has little agency freedom to pursue this functioning (she genuinely feels unable to engage, given the long-standing hostility between the school and the community), Agnes and Cecilia both know they could do more in this respect. In the Kenyan focus group one teacher talked about how she liaised with the community:

‘If I am dealing with a pupil with a problem... I go to the home and then I understand, and when I come here I am able to guide them in a way that takes into account this background. I really think this is important, for you to teach this child, maybe the child doesn’t even have a home, or a good home, or maybe the child is left hungry, or maybe they are caring for parents, I find it good to understand their life there. And I make it clear that I am not judging the parents, I have the child’s interests at heart, so the parents trust me and now they come to me with problems and if I can I help them.’ (female teacher, Kijani)

Cecilia later expressed embarrassment that she did not do this. She talked about how she engaged with her church community – offering friendship and support – and admitted that she could engage with the school community in a similar way rather than ‘leave it up to those that already do’:

‘So I should really try to contribute more to the social and economic development of the local community. We need to interact with them to educate them on the health, and religion, we can give them some moral guidance, and we all do this for the children in school but we should really do more of this in the community, to make that connection between them.’ (Cecilia)

Because other teachers in the school take on this role, Cecilia feels less inclination to do so. She also chooses to prioritise functionings that relate to the more tangible and immediate needs of her class – the times she identified as when she could visit the community (break and lunch-time) are spent marking books and holding revision sessions. Agnes also chooses not to pursue functionings that relate to community engagement:

‘I don’t know nothing about them much, I’ve never had a bad experience with them, they like Christians teaching their children because they are mostly their own people and that way their children get used to Christians, but because they are their own people I don’t have much to do with them... they don’t need my help.’  
(Agnes)

Agnes feels respected by the community and feels that her relationship with them is positive, but because of the linguistic, religious and cultural differences between them feels she has little to offer them.

#### *Family commitments*

Marriage and the responsibilities associated with raising children, are one of the key reasons the teachers choose not to pursue functionings for which they have agency. The capabilities this affects most are those that involve a choice between spending time and money on the functioning itself, or on their families. ‘Professional development’ - an official and a teacher-generated capability - is a key area in which this choice has to be made.

In the first field visit to Kenya in 2007 Cecilia spoke about her plans to upgrade her qualification so she would be granted a promotion:

'I was not automatically sent on a course and I was always waiting. So instead of waiting I sacrificed myself, I will take myself to school and pay to get upgraded.'

(Cecilia)

Further correspondence with Cecilia in early 2008 revealed that she had submitted an application form to a local college for an in-service Diploma in Early Childhood Studies. When asked for an update in 2009 she replied:

'...you know I wanted to go to college and I was supposed to go last year but I was rejected because I was blessed with a baby. Then because of the costs and the time involved I decided to take care of the baby until he is a year or so. Then I will go back to college.' (Cecilia)

In South Africa Mandisa dropped out of her master's programme when she adopted her daughter (see cameo 7) because the child needed round-the-clock care:

'As soon as the question of adopting her arose I knew that I would suspend my studies so I could give her treatment my full attention... she was so sick I had to give her better care than her family could otherwise I was not doing my job.'

(Mandisa)

At the end of the Ghanaian fieldwork in 2010 Ruth was pregnant with her first child and was concerned about how this would affect her studies:

'I'm hoping to get a first grade in the diploma and then go for the degree but because now I am married, oh, Alison it is so hard! [laughs] You are always cooking and washing! Every night and early in the morning too. Before I had so much time to work on my studies now I break from school and I must go to the market and prepare food. Then after dinner it is late and I am too tired to study so I go to bed at 10pm and set my alarm for 12am. Then I get up and study for two hours in here [the living room] and then at 2am I go back to bed until 5am or 6am. And this is now! What it will be like when the baby is here I have no idea... I will be so busy maybe the degree will have to wait.' (Ruth)

Before her daughter was born Nomfundo completed a range of self-funded additional qualifications alongside her teaching and is waiting to enrol on a part-time master's programme. During the first field visit in 2007 her main reason for not starting was because she didn't feel she could balance studying with spending enough time with her young daughter. During the second field visit in 2010 her main reason was because her daughter's school fees were so high she could not afford both. This highlights another way motherhood can influence teachers' choices about professional development: when teachers prioritise the educational needs of their children over their own. As chapter 4 showed, with the exception of Sudan, teachers from the countries in this study are expected to fund their own professional development programmes. Habibah is fortunate that her husband can support their children at university and her professional development simultaneously but she is the exception in this study. Cecilia's reason for choosing Early Childhood Studies was because it was the cheapest diploma course available and much of the family's income goes towards their son's private school fees. Chapter 5 showed how Agnes wants to study for a diploma but cannot afford it.

'Money! Yeah, money [is what's stopping me]. Because, you know, my husband has two wives [and] what little money there is, you have to help your kids, their school fees have to come first so there is no spare money for my studies.' (Agnes)

She is reluctant to ask her husband because she knows that it is difficult for him to support two families and with the little money he can spare she prioritises her children's education over her own.

### *Boundaries of the school day*

A key reason the teachers choose not to achieve functionings they have agency to pursue is because for most of them the boundaries of the school day represent the boundaries of the time that is expected of them to work as teachers. This is, in part, due to the association between shorter hours and lower wages (they are paid less than other civil servants because they work fewer hours) and, in part, due to their responsibilities at home; for all of the teachers in this study childcare and household chores are solely their responsibility and the shorter contracted hours are a key perk of the profession.

Agnes and Cecilia are aware that they should be engaging with the community but have a long journey at the end of the school day and just want to get home. The boundaries of the school day prevent other teachers from engaging in extra-curricular activities too:

'All of us are mothers, so we have a lot of things at our homes to do, some go to bring their children home from school, some go to prepare food to eat or for their families to eat...' (Habibah)



‘Women enjoy teaching. This is especially important for teachers in villages because we can be near our children, near our houses and near our school all at the same time, we can go home early and still have time for cooking and any other things.’ (Sabeera)

‘...because we finish at 1:30pm I can have the whole afternoon to study.’ (Ruth)

With the exception of Mandisa and Nomfundo who see extra-curricular work as a core part of their job, the teachers choose not to participate in extra-curricular activities unless they take place during the school day.

#### *Cutting corners*

A theme that emerged from all of the teachers’ data is ‘cutting corners’. This theme is related to the boundaries of the school day and the prioritisation of values (themes discussed above and below respectively), but involves a more conscious decision not to pursue something mainly because it is easier not to and the repercussions of this decision are minimal. Habibah and Sabeera, for example, often arrive late for school but are able to do so because there are no repercussions. They have agency to be punctual but choose not to achieve it on a regular basis.

The common but unpredictable absenteeism at the Ghanaian school means that teachers are regularly faced with fewer than ten pupils in their class. Ruth knows she should teach these pupils regardless but often chooses not to, opting instead to use the time for her studies or to socialise. This decision prevents Ruth’s achievement of the official capability of ‘personal management’ and the teacher-generated capabilities of ‘inspiration’ and ‘planning’. When Ruth does teach her class she often makes the decision not to use the

full range of pedagogical approaches in which she is being trained (and values highly) because she feels these are more appropriate and easier to implement in schools where the pupils' English is of a higher standard and where they are more motivated to learn:

'The pupils here, they are used to this style of teaching and it's time consuming to use new methods with them, so I do take the easy way with them sometimes.'

(Ruth)

The decision prevents Ruth from achieving the capabilities of 'pedagogy and resources' in both the official and teacher-generated lists. Agnes also chooses the 'easy way' with her pupils. While she knows she is supposed to prepare a plan for each lesson, and is capable of doing this, the majority of lessons are taught directly from the text book, following on from the previous lesson. This compromises her achievement of the official capabilities of 'personal management' and the teacher-generated capability of 'planning'. In addition – after 20 years in Gadan – Agnes could choose to learn Hausa and be able to communicate with her pupils. Not choosing to means she fails to achieve any of the functionings within the official capability of 'language and communication'.

It is important to distinguish the theme of cutting corners from the more prevalent theme in the literature and official documents of de-motivation. The latter suggests that de-motivated teachers cut corners in all they do. This study shows that this is not the case: they only cut corners in areas where supervision is lacking or where the school culture permits it. This is discussed further in chapters 7 and 8.

### *Prioritisation of values*

For a range of reasons, all of the teachers choose to prioritise some functionings and capabilities over others. Section 6.4 showed how the teachers had to make a choice between getting through the curriculum or prioritising comprehension of topics before moving on. For this reason, even though some had agency to do so, no teachers in this study could fully achieve both the capabilities of 'personal management' and 'pedagogy and resources'.

Since the number of pupils in Cecilia's class doubled she regularly has to make choices between which functionings to prioritise over others. A key challenge for her is marking 60 books at the end of every lesson – keeping up-to-date with assessment is a functioning from the official and teacher-generated lists. Cecilia spends every break and lunch time marking, prioritising this over other functionings such as lesson planning, engaging with the pupils and the community or being involved in extra-curricular activities. While she has agency freedom to pursue these functionings, she doesn't achieve them because she chooses to prioritise marking. Ruth often chooses to pursue her professional development over other aspects of her work by studying for her diploma during lesson time.

It is important at this point to acknowledge that, unlike this analysis, teachers' professional lives are not neatly separated into three discrete lists of professional capabilities. The teachers' own values constantly intersect and overlap with the official values and choices between the two appear to be both conscious and unconscious. Sometimes the teachers choose not to pursue officially valued functionings because they value their own functionings more. Mandisa, for example, runs a pilot scheme teaching the younger pupils bilingually over the official government policy of teaching them in their home language; she prioritises this because she believes it is in the best interest of the pupils. Cecilia and Ruth

preach from the bible to their pupils – despite knowing this is not an officially valued functioning – because it is personally important to them that the children are well-versed in Christianity. At other times a personal functioning is prioritised because it appears to be more achievable than an official alternative. The intersection of values and the overlap of professional capabilities are discussed in detail in chapter 7.

## **6.6 Chapter conclusion**

This chapter has analysed the empirical data from this study in order to illustrate the teachers' professional capability – that is, the extent to which they can pursue and achieve valued functionings in their work. What is valued has been analysed from three perspectives, the official perspective, the teacher-generated perspective and from the perspectives of individual teachers. The chapter has shown how the teachers in this study are often unable to access capabilities relating to their work from whichever perspective their values and actions are analysed. The chapter has highlighted key common reasons that prevent teachers from accessing capabilities and has also shown how interrelated teachers' values, agency and choices are.

Chapters 4 and 5 showed how there are differences between the official and teacher-generated organisational pictures of teachers' work: notions of good and effective teaching differ between the two pictures. This chapter has extended this understanding to explore not only what teachers think they should be doing, but also what they are actually able to do. It has shown that the teachers think they are working more effectively than is suggested when their work is measured against official capabilities: the data suggests that teachers have more freedom to access the professional capabilities that they value than

those that are valued officially. This has important implications for governments trying to enhance teachers' work because teachers and governments appear to be working to different agendas. This is especially important because, as the chapter has also shown, teachers' capabilities often interact and are interdependent. Understanding how teachers' capabilities interact appears necessary to understanding their overall freedom to work well.

Cohen (1993) suggests that the key question in any empirical application of the capability approach is: are people equal with respect to effective freedom? If this question is applied to whether or not the teachers are free to pursue the official capabilities, the answer appears to be 'no': the teachers appear to have limited professional capability. However, this chapter suggests that the teachers are also limited in the pursuit of other professional capabilities that do not feature in the official literature but that could enhance the educational achievement and life chances of pupils. If governments want to enhance teachers' work it is worth focusing on why teachers cannot and are not pursuing official capabilities, but it is also worth understanding more about the teachers' organisational pictures and what is preventing the pursuit and achievement of these other, but potentially complementary, professional capabilities.

These and other empirical and theoretical debates raised by the data and analysis are drawn together in the next chapter.

## *Cameo 6 An English lesson*

(Gadanan School, Nigeria, 12<sup>th</sup> March 2007)

**11:00:** Pupils enter class and sit at their desks or on the floor.

**11:03:** Habibah hurries them along saying 'come on, come on, today you will like this lesson - we are going to learn about FACES!' She pulls a funny face and the children squeal with mock fear and laughter and rush to their places.

**11:06:** Habibah says 'Ok this is an English lesson and today we are going to learn about the parts of the face and most importantly how to spell the words'. She repeats what she has said in Hausa. Writes date and title on board. 'But first I want you to sing me a song. You know Heads, Shoulders, Knees and Toes yes?' The children shout 'yes'. 'Well' says Habibah, 'that's very clever of you, you already have a good start on the lesson. Come on, up and sing loudly for Zeinab' [another teacher who is supporting the class] Children stand up and sing the song.

**11:12:** While the children are singing Habibah draws a face on the board. She checks her watch and tells the children to sit back down. 'What are these?' [points to eyes] Pupils shout 'eyes!' Habibah points to the nose 'What is this?' Pupils shout 'nose!'... and so on until all of the parts of the face have been named.

**11:14:** Habibah writes a list of eye, nose, mouth, ear, next to the face. Calls to pupils 'Who can tell me which one says eyes?' Pupils raise hands. Habibah picks a boy who comes and points to the word eye. Habibah says 'is he right?' pupils shout 'yes!' Habibah says, 'good, clap for him'. Pupils clap. 'Now, who can spell eye?' Only 3 pupils raise their hands. Habibah picks a girl who says 'e...' and struggles over the letter 'y'. Habibah says 'ah I picked the difficult one so you have done well, you pronounce it like why remember?' The girl nods. 'So spell eye for me' Habibah says, 'e-y-e' says the girl. 'Wonderful!' says Habibah. 'Now for the most difficult part'. She rubs the word 'eye' from the list and asks who would like to come and write the word eye on the board. She picks a girl who gets it right, Habibah rubs it off and asks a boy to come and do the same.

**11:18:** Habibah repeats the exercise for all parts of the face.

**11:30:** 'Now', says Habibah 'I want you to turn to your neighbour and we are going to play a game. I want you to take it in turns to point to a part of your face and instead of telling you what it is, your neighbour has to spell what it is. Do you understand?' The pupils look uncertain. Habibah repeats the instructions in Hausa. 'Ok' she says, Zeinab will help me demonstrate. Zeinab? Zeinab comes up to the front and Habibah points to her eye. 'E-y-e...eye!' says Zeinab. Now Zeinab points to her ear. 'E-a-r... ear!' says Habibah. 'Ok do you understand?' 'Yes' says the class. They turn to each other and start the exercise. Habibah and Zeinab wander around the class listening to the pupils. After a couple of minutes Habibah rubs the words off the board so the pupils are doing it on their own.

**11:35:** Habibah checks her watch. 'Woah' she says, 'we are nearly out of time! Exercise books out please!' She asks the children to draw a face in their books and label each part (and repeats the instructions in Hausa). Habibah and Zeinab wander around the class offering help where needed.

**11:45:** The bell rings and Zeinab collects the pupils' exercise books

# Chapter 7 New perspectives on teachers' professional lives, agency and capabilities in Sub-Saharan Africa

## 7.1 Introduction

This chapter draws together the data and analysis presented in chapters 4-6 and highlights the study's contributions to methodological, theoretical and empirical knowledge about the use of the capability approach in research into teachers' work. Specifically it answers the penultimate research question: What new insights can the capability approach provide into researching the professional lives and values of teachers and what are the limitations of this approach?

The use of the capability approach to frame and analyse teachers' professional values, agency freedom and agency achievement represents a distinctive contribution to the capabilities – and education - literature. Chapter 2 showed how capability perspectives are increasingly used in education studies but most focus on how education expands or restricts the capabilities of students. While others have suggested that the capabilities of Sub-Saharan African teachers could provide a useful avenue for analysis (Yates, 2007), only Tao (2012) has robustly applied the approach in her study of teacher well-being and deprivation in Tanzania. Rather than focus on well-being this study has used a capabilities framework to evaluate teachers' agency freedom to pursue and achieve valued functionings in their work. However, originality in itself is not necessarily valuable unless it points towards new insights into the questions under consideration or into the use and usefulness of the approach. This chapter highlights these insights.

Section 7.2 clarifies the original aspects of this study in empirical, theoretical and methodological terms. Section 7.3 brings together the key findings of this study and shows how these findings respond to the first three research questions. It offers insights into what these tell us about what teachers do and are able to do in rural schools in Sub-Saharan Africa and considers how these findings were facilitated by the use of the capability approach. Section 7.4 suggests more theoretical insights into how this study might inform thinking about the use of the capability approach. It also considers the limitations of using the capability approach to understand teachers' professional lives. Section 7.5 draws together these possibilities and limitations to present a model of teachers' professional capability.

## **7.2 Contributions of the research**

This section highlights the study's contributions to empirical, theoretical and methodological knowledge.

### ***7.2.1 Empirical***

This study explored what is valued in teachers' work from official and teachers' own perspectives. Considering both perspectives has been useful in empirical terms because, most commonly, teachers in Sub-Saharan Africa are considered and judged against criteria determined externally to their individual circumstances. Policies, guidelines and assessment criteria for teachers in the five countries are decided nationally, and often with international influences (see Takyi-Amoako, 2012 and chapter 4 of this thesis), and schools are ranked by how pupils score in nationally or internationally set examinations. This not only excludes the perspectives of teachers, it ignores the possibility that teachers'



perspectives might be of importance and value. This assumption pervades much of the literature on Sub-Saharan African teachers' work too: measuring teacher effectiveness against a nationally determined set of competence or effectiveness criteria (Onderi and Croll, 2009), or measuring teachers' motivation to pursue nationally determined objectives (VSO, 2002), for example, implicitly assumes first that teachers are fully aware of these criteria and objectives and secondly that teachers share the values embedded in them. Criticising teachers for not fulfilling these criteria, or assuming the reasons they do not fulfil the criteria are a lack of skill or motivation, only reveals a partial picture. This study has helped to contribute to this picture by showing how what teachers value and what they are motivated to pursue in their work is sometimes different from what is expected of them. It has also shown how teachers' values and agency to pursue valued objectives are shaped by complex intersections of their personal contexts and professional commitments.

A further empirical contribution of this study is that it was designed to challenge the common negative rhetoric around teachers outlined in chapters 2 and 4. This negativity is expressed in two main ways. Primarily it is suggested through official documents and media reports that teachers are failing to meet the standards expected of them either through their behaviour or through their inability to secure acceptable grades for their pupils. Secondly – and in somewhat of a contradiction - this rhetoric suggests that teachers are victims of their circumstances. Female teachers and teachers in rural schools tend to be granted greatest victim-status; it is often implied that they are passive recipients of the challenging working conditions they face, or at least that their experiences are defined by deprivation.

This study, then, provides insights into the professional experiences of rural teachers and how they understand their role, without relying on common assumptions about what

teaching in rural schools is like. Teachers' professional experiences have been considered and analysed in relation to the rural environments in which they teach, but teachers' values, agency and choices have been the central focus of analysis rather than the challenges they face or the criticisms levelled against them.

Similarly, rather than assume – as is assumed in much of the literature – that being a female teacher in a rural school creates a 'double burden' for teachers, this study has focused on understanding how women teachers experience rural teaching environments and how their values intersect with these environments. Focussing on teachers' values, agency and choices left the analysis open to discovering – which it ultimately did – that rural schools can be sites of positive professional experiences for women teachers. This possibility has been largely ignored in academic, policy and practitioner literature about women teachers in Sub-Saharan Africa.

### ***7.2.2 Theoretical***

Chapter 2 showed how, in the international education literature, existing approaches to understanding Sub-Saharan African teachers' work often fail to connect what teachers think about their work with what they actually end up doing in their work. Exploring teacher agency freedom and agency achievement using a capability framework has enabled these connections to be made. Secondly, within the capabilities and education literature the predominant focus is on pupil well-being or agency. Few studies have sought to understand teacher agency. Through its empirical focus and theoretical framing this study has bridged a gap between these two bodies of literature.

In chapter 2 I argued that teachers should have the freedom to pursue and achieve officially determined goals of their profession, i.e. they should be free to do their job as it is expected of them. In the five countries studied most policy-driven analyses of teachers' ability to do their work – as described in chapter 4 – are framed as a competence checklist. Teachers are ranked or graded depending on how many competences they can demonstrate against officially determined criteria (see DocK1/2010 for example). The teacher is scored, rather than the system that produces, educates and supports the teacher. Using the capability approach to understand how much agency freedom teachers have to pursue and achieve officially valued goals in their work has scored the system and the entitlements afforded to teachers within this system. This approach has shown how existing systems of educational governance can limit teachers' agency freedom to pursue these goals.

There is another reason why this study has been concerned with teachers' agency rather than well-being. It would be misguided to assume that what teachers' value contributes equally to their well-being as well as the well-being of their pupils. While the pursuit of teacher well-being is important and it is reasonable to suggest (as Tao, 2012 does) that a teacher who is not able to achieve personal well-being is less likely to be interested in or able to pursue the well-being of her pupils, it is not reasonable to assume this is always the case.

This study, by focusing on the alternative 'concepts of advantage' of agency freedom and achievement, shifts the focus away from seeing teachers just as 'vehicle[s] of well-being' (Sen, 2009:289). Focusing on teachers' agency freedom has enabled this study to show ways in which teachers may use this agency to improve the lives of others at the expense of their own well-being. Several of the teachers, for example, use agency to prioritise the

educational and emotional needs of their families over their own professional development. Nearly all of the teachers spend their own money on resources for their teaching or on food or clothes for their pupils. Cecilia spends break and lunch times marking her pupils' books rather than socialising with the other teachers in the kitchen. Mandisa goes into school most Saturdays to catch up with administrative tasks.

These teachers often use their agency freedom, therefore, to 'uplift the lives of others' (Sen, 2009:289). Understanding the ways in which teachers' agency freedom is used presents a more holistic picture of what teachers value and choose to do and reveals 'layers of complexity' that may not be captured in other analyses (Robeyns, 2005b:194). Chapter 4 showed how the official documents imply that governments are responsible for the well-being of teachers, where teachers' well-being is conceptualised within relatively narrow and known categories of remuneration, resources, housing and support. Tao's (2012) study of teacher well-being in Tanzania has usefully corroborated and expanded upon these aspects of desired well-being (by drawing on the teachers' perspectives), but this study has suggested that teachers' values are also located in the broader social environment in which they work. Their values respond to the specific needs of these environments and are often focused beyond the limits of their personal well-being (Sen, 2009).

This study also explored the usefulness of separating out a specific subset of a person's valued functionings (in this case, teachers' professional values) and analysing these independently of other valued functionings. This sets it apart from many other empirical uses of the capability approach which tend to consider people's overall capabilities (that is, their sum total of valued objectives). This latter practice aligns with Nussbaum's conceptualisation of the approach (whether Nussbaum's list is used or a new list is defined

that encompasses a broad range of agency or well-being goals) and with a more holistic belief in the responsibility of governments to ensure social justice for all citizens. This study, instead, drew on Sen's suppositions around how the approach might be applied in different contexts by introducing the concept of professional capabilities. Sen suggests, for example, that there is often good sense in 'narrowing the coverage of capabilities for a specific purpose' (Sen, 2004:74). Narrowing the coverage of capabilities was consciously aligned with the purpose of this study which was to explore professional values in teachers' work and teachers' pursuit of them. The lists were specifically generated for this purpose, not a more general exploration of teachers' values (although it still considered these and acknowledged where they interrelated with professional values). The effectiveness of this more focused approach to analysing capabilities is discussed in section 7.4.

This study has also shown how, when using the capability approach to assess professional capabilities – where there is a contractual obligation to pursue certain functionings - it is important to determine agency freedom *and* agency achievement of valued functionings. Chapter 6 showed that understanding what teachers *can* do represents a different outcome to what they actually *choose* to do and, therefore, end up doing. If the capability approach is to be a useful way of thinking about professional work it is important to engage not only with the culmination outcomes, i.e. what is on the list, but the comprehensive outcome which considers people's eventual choices and the reasons that underlie these choices (Robeyns, 2005b). In a study of teachers' work, it appears to be necessary to undertake three levels of analysis: an analysis of what is valued (to determine valued functionings) an analysis of what is possible (to determine agency freedom) and an analysis of what teachers choose to do (to determine agency achievement), as well as in-depth qualitative analysis of teachers' choices and reasoning

at each level. The exploration of these three levels has enabled more in-depth insights into what teachers can do and choose to do, than can be provided by existing teacher identity, teacher motivation or teacher effectiveness literature.

Finally, focusing on teachers' values, agency and achievement has shown how when a choice is made to achieve one capability, this choice may facilitate or limit teachers' values and agency and affect their choices in terms of other capabilities. This finding has important empirical as well as theoretical implications and is discussed further in sections 7.3 to 7.5 of this chapter.

### ***7.2.3 Methodological***

While this study was inspired by other uses of the capability approach, the way in which the lists of capabilities were arrived at represents a methodological contribution to the capabilities literature. It drew on Robeyns' procedural approach (2005b) in which she suggests drawing capabilities from three key areas: the literature, policy documents and participants themselves and then refining the list through discussion and debate. However, the key difference in this study is that while Robeyns suggests collating the areas to create one definitive list of capabilities appropriate to the purpose of the investigation, the analysis in this study kept the lists deliberately separate. The main purpose of this study was not to create one 'ideal list' of professional capabilities for teachers (although sections 7.3 and 7.4 discuss the empirical and theoretical implications of this) but to use the capability approach to provide a framework for understanding different perspectives on what is valued in teachers' work and for understanding what teachers are able to do and choose to do in their work. Keeping the lists separate is a lesser-used approach (Biggeri et al, 2006) and has enabled different levels of analysis around what is valued and around

what teachers are able to do. This approach enabled these values and functionings to be considered in their own right, rather than subsumed into a neat but potentially neutral list.

A second methodological contribution is that, rather than expect the teachers to articulate their values in the language of the capability approach, this study inferred their values from across interviews, focus groups, questionnaires, shadowing and conversations. While direct questions were asked during more formal data-gathering activities, these answers were incorporated into the wider data set for verification and substantiation. Coast et al (2006) used a similar inductive approach by extrapolating the values of older people in the UK from in-depth interviews about their lives and using these values to develop an index of well-being, but their data was limited to these interviews. In my study I felt that interviews alone could not capture the breadth and depth required for a rigorous analysis of capabilities. What was valued, what was possible and what was chosen were captured through an immersive and inductive process of observing what the teachers did as well as what they said.

The methodological scope of this study was also more expansive than other applications of the capability approach which tend to focus on either the generation of a list, or individuals' capability to pursue functionings on a pre-determined list. Robeyns (2005a:101) points out that there are 'cases and situations where it makes more sense to investigate people's achieved functionings directly instead of evaluating their capabilities'. In order for this study to be informative it was necessary to do both: first to understand the teachers' capabilities by exploring what it termed the 'agency space' and secondly to understand their achieved functionings through an exploration of the 'achievement space'. This is because the latter involves a choice and it was important to know (in order to answer the research questions) not only if teachers *can* achieve valued functionings, but

also whether or not they *do*. In studies that are interested in agency and particularly when trying to understand individuals in their professional contexts, I argue that the methodological choice is not either/or: understanding the agency space *and* the achievement space is necessary to capture a fuller picture of people's professional lives.

### **7.3 Main findings of the study**

This study used the capability approach to frame the first three research questions which were composed to find out what is valued in teachers' work and whether or not teachers are able to pursue and achieve the things that are valued. Through a capability framework valued beings and doings in teachers' work were defined as functionings and grouped into professional capabilities. Through a capability-framed analysis the study showed the extent to which teachers are able to pursue and achieve professional capabilities as they are understood by the individual teachers themselves, the collective views of the seven teachers and their colleagues, and by official documents around teachers and their work from the five focus countries. The purpose of this framing was to reach a better understanding of what female teachers in rural schools can do, what they actually do and why they make these choices. This section draws together the main empirical findings of this study and shows how they contribute to and move forward existing understandings of teachers' professional lives. Section 7.3.1 presents the key findings of chapters 4, 5 and 6 and section 7.3.2 draws together these findings to suggest overall insights from the study and how reaching these insights was facilitated by the capability approach.



### **7.3.1 Summary of key findings**

Chapter 4 revealed the official 'organisational picture' (Sen, 2009:18) of teachers' work by answering the first research question: How are teachers' roles officially understood in Sub-Saharan Africa and what do governments value in teachers' work?

It was found that while there were some differences between the countries, the documents represented a fairly consistent organisational picture, and this picture resonated with the language and content of the EFA and MDG agendas. An idealised and nostalgic notion of teachers as loyal nation-builders was presented across the documents, but this contrasted with the more prevalent portrayal of teachers as under-qualified, de-motivated and under-performing. Quality was a key theme but there were few clear or consistent definitions of what is meant by the term: the discourse is largely undefined but predominantly negative. Teachers and teaching are largely depicted as poor quality rather than good quality and the chapter identified different attributes of poor quality teachers and teaching. Teachers demonstrating these attributes are depicted as a threat to national development.

The chapter then moved away from the language of quality and towards that of values. It argued that interpreting good quality teachers and teaching as the inverse of poor quality teachers and teaching was not a robust platform from which to analyse teachers' work. The documents and education officials' narratives were therefore analysed in order to understand valued aspects of teaching. From these valued aspects a list of officially determined valued functionings and capabilities was compiled.

It was found that a wide range of beings and doings are valued in teachers' work and, for the most part, these beings and doings are granted equal status. That is, teachers are expected to be able to pursue and achieve as many of these valued beings and doings as

possible. It was also found that many of these valued behaviours were idealised. Identified functionings were often described elsewhere in the documents as impossible or highly unlikely. Functionings were identified, for example, that assumed that teachers teach a manageable number of pupils and have access to a wide range of resources, even though elsewhere it was acknowledged that class sizes are unmanageably high for many teachers and that most schools are under-resourced. They assumed that teachers possess a certain level of pedagogical knowledge and skills even though they also acknowledged that many teachers are un- or under-qualified and that teacher education has, for many teachers been insufficient. The documents also depicted teachers as gender-, geographically- and politically-neutral and there was an assumption that teachers are aware of all of the beings and doings expected of them. While the chapter acknowledged that policies and other official documents are designed to be visionary and portray an 'ideal' situation, the tensions between the acknowledged circumstances of teachers' working environments and expectations teachers' professional capabilities suggests that the pursuit of these capabilities for many teachers is unrealistic.

Chapter 5 explored what is valued in teachers' work from the perspective of teachers to present an alternative organisational picture. It answered the second research question (how do female teachers in rural Sub-Saharan African primary schools understand their role and what do they value in their work?) by drawing on the narratives and experiences of female teachers working in rural schools across the five focus countries.

First the chapter described the professional contexts of the seven focus teachers and highlighted the professional values that were most important to each. It showed how the experiences of women teachers in rural schools are far from uniform and that rural women teachers in Sub-Saharan Africa value a range of different things in their work. Analysis of

the teachers' professional contexts and experiences found that while they contribute to the shaping of their professional values, teachers working in similar contexts can value very different things.

To make sense of these differences, the chapter looked across these contexts to identify common themes in the teachers' lives and the influences these have had on shaping the teachers' professional values. Four themes were identified: career-path, rurality and relationships, motherhood and religion.

Chapter 5 then compiled a list of capabilities and related functionings drawn from the teachers' values and wider data set and compared these with the official list. It found that while a considerable number of functionings are shared between the two organisational pictures the official functionings appear to be influenced by a broader national and international focus and a longer timeframe while the teachers' valued functionings tend to focus more on the small-scale and immediate needs of their classrooms and communities.

Chapter 6 answered the third research question (to what extent are female teachers in rural schools able to pursue and achieve valued aspects of teaching?) The analysis provided a way of understanding the teachers' agency to pursue and achieve the professional capabilities extrapolated from the data. This analysis showed how none of the teachers have complete freedom to do their job in the ways that are expected of them. None had the agency freedom to pursue all of the officially valued functionings. The official capabilities that are most accessible to the teachers are 'recognition', 'vocation' and 'language and communication'. The official capabilities that are least accessible to the teachers are 'loyalty', 'pedagogy and resources' and 'pupil respect'. However, none of the official capabilities are inaccessible to all teachers which suggests that with the right

information, skills, tools and support teachers' agency to pursue official capabilities could be enhanced.

The teachers have more agency to pursue teacher-generated functionings than official functionings, although again none of them has complete freedom to do their job in ways that the teachers collectively aspire to. The teacher-generated capabilities that are least accessible to the teachers are 'pedagogy and resources' and 'support and encouragement'.

The analysis showed that teachers who have high levels of agency freedom in one list tend also to have high levels in the other lists. However (and this has particular relevance when considering the official list) the analysis also showed that teachers are far more likely to lack agency than they are to choose not to act on this agency – in most areas of their work they are doing what they can. Finally the chapter explored the space between agency and achievement to understand why the teachers sometimes choose not to achieve functionings they have agency to pursue. Exploring the agency space and the achievement space revealed how there is considerable overlap between the lists of professional capabilities and that the teachers' values, agency and the choices they make in respect of these lists appear to be interrelated.

### ***7.3.2 Intersections of findings and new insights***

This section will consider these findings more holistically and explore areas in which findings across the literature, data and analysis chapters in this thesis intersect. It offers new insights into existing empirical knowledge around teachers' work and explains how the capability framework has been helpful in reaching these insights.

*Intersection of rurality, gender and professional capability*

The analysis of the official documents in chapter 4 revealed that personal aspects of teachers' lives are largely absent from the official literature on teachers and teaching. In particular, there is a lack of acknowledgement of the ways in which teachers' personal lives could impact positively on their work. Teachers tend to be depicted as an un-gendered workforce and there is little recognition of the differences between urban and rural schools. This gender and geographical neutrality was also found in the academic and practitioner literature presented in chapter 2. Where a rural/urban distinction is made it tends to be over-simplified (not recognising, for example, the different categories of rural that were identified by the teachers) and used to demonstrate comparatively negative aspects of rural teaching.

In contrast to these generalisations and omissions, by exploring the teachers' professional lives through a capability framework this study has found that the intersection of rurality and gender has a significant effect on their professional values, their agency freedom to pursue valued functionings and the choices they make in the pursuit of these functionings.

First motherhood – and the responsibilities this brings – means that teaching is the only career open to Sabeera and Habibah. With no other formal employment opportunities in the villages they live in, and restricted un-chaperoned movement outside the village, the local school is the only approved place of work. In addition the timings of the school day mean they can still complete all of the tasks expected of them at home. While alternative employment opportunities are technically open to Cecilia, the proximity of the village school and, again, the timings of the school day mean she is able to drop her son off at his

school and be there to meet him at the end of the day as well as spending time with him in the afternoons and helping him with his homework.

This finding supports other literature which aims to explain why primary teaching is a predominantly female profession in some Sub-Saharan African countries (UNESCO, 2010) but it also provides a new dimension to the rural education literature. Chapter 2 showed how when the literature on teaching, gender and rurality intersects it is focused on why rural areas are even less appealing to female teachers than they are to male teachers (Mulkeen, 2005; VSO, 2002). This study has shown how teaching can not only provide a highly valued opportunity for formal employment and professional development for rural women, teaching locally enables them to participate in formal employment and gain educational qualifications without neglecting their duties as wives and mothers.

The literature around rural teaching focuses mostly on the issue of teachers being posted to rural schools from urban areas and the problems this causes for them socially, logistically and professionally, particularly if they are women. While this is an important issue it is not the only story to be told in a discussion of rural women teachers. Another story, of teachers teaching in their own communities, is largely omitted from the discourse. More recent initiatives in teacher education focus on training women to teach in their own communities (e.g. Safford et al, 2012) and this study provides evidence as to the value of such initiatives for women in rural communities. It also provides evidence as to the value of local women teachers *for* communities. The professional values of the teachers in this study who have close personal relationships with the communities in which they work (namely Habibah, Sabeera and Mandisa) are more aligned with the values of the community itself. On the other hand the professional values of the teachers who are

posted to villages and have little or no relationship with the community (for example Ruth and Agnes) are more aligned with their own personal and professional development.

The findings of this study that capture the intersection of gender and rurality also contribute to another aspect of the debate around rural women teachers. Chapter 2 showed how Kirk's work with women teachers in Pakistan (2004; 2006) challenged the notion suggested by UNESCO (2001; 2011) that women teachers provide unquestionably positive role models for rural pupils. Kirk argued that women, especially local women, are more likely to perpetuate rather than challenge the existing gendered status quo, therefore have, at best, a null effect on gender norms. In this study the teachers who were not local to the community (Ruth, Cecilia, Mandisa and Nomfundo in particular) placed a high value on their role in motivating pupils to aspire to a life outside the village (or township). The corresponding capabilities and functionings mirrored their own experiences of having 'escaped' the rural lives they were born into and the narrower set of opportunities they faced as a result. The teachers who had the strongest personal connections to the community (Habibah and Sabeera) did not consider this a priority in their work. Not only were they more accepting that many pupils, and in particular the girls, would marry early and, most likely, not leave the village (here too their values mirrored their own experiences), they had less agency to change this status quo because they were respected embodiments of this gendered norm. While the teacher-generated valued functioning of motivating pupils to aspire to a life outside the village was not explicitly gendered, the absence of this functioning and the lack of agency to pursue this valued functioning were.

The intersection of gender and rurality is also evident in the analysis of the teachers' functionings that draw on their roles as mothers, and through this, their understandings of

the greater physical and emotional needs of rural pupils. Chapter 5 showed how having children influenced Cecilia's values in her work; she became more tolerant and her understanding of the learning needs of children became more developed. For Cecilia the intersection of her experiences as a mother and her understanding of the specific needs of the children in her community underline three of her five individual functionings: loving and nurturing children, inspiring pupils and developing pupils' skills outside the curriculum. These findings support those of Lumby et al (2011) who suggest that the skills and experiences South African head teachers acquire through motherhood provides them with affective and practical skills that advantage them in their work.

For Nomfundo too an awareness of the advantages she is able to provide for her own daughter – both financially and academically – heightens her awareness of the learning needs of pupils from the township. The intersection of motherhood and rurality underline two of her functionings too and, like Cecilia's, these relate to developing pupils' skills outside of the curriculum and motivating them to aspire to a life outside of the township. These two examples are particularly important because despite valuing other, different functionings that result in them working very differently as teachers, the two values that Nomfundo and Cecilia share that are underlined by the intersection of motherhood and rurality are absent from the officially valued functionings and do not feature in the list of official capabilities.

#### *Intersection of gender, rurality and professional development*

Using the capability approach to frame a study of teachers' work has also provided insights into the intersection of gender, rurality and teachers' professional development. The professional development literature is dominated by statistics of unqualified and under-qualified teachers (Anamuah-Mensah et al, 2012) and chapter 2 showed why these



numbers are often unhelpful in understanding teacher qualification in the region. Chapter 4 showed how the official documents place a strong emphasis on the professional development of teachers and chapter 5 showed how professional development is also highly valued by the teachers.

However while the official documents present professional development as a collective project within a school, scaffolded through collegiality, the teachers unanimously saw it as an individual endeavour. The official focus - given recently raised minimum standards for teaching in four of the five focus countries - is primarily on upgrading teachers to meet this standard, but attention is also given to knowledge and skills development to enhance pupil learning and to keeping teachers up to date with changes in the curriculum. While the teachers also value these aspects of professional development the predominant purpose for them is to move up the teaching scale and enhance their salary or status. For Habibah and Sabeera professional development offers the opportunity to increase their social standing within their families and community and prove that they are more than just wives and mothers. Because their professional development is limited to the school (as women, their movement outside of the village is limited) gaining new qualifications within the teaching profession is their only avenue for academic development.

The data indicated very little knowledge-sharing or skill-sharing among teachers – this was not something that the teachers claimed, or suggested, was valued. The main example of this can be seen in the Nigerian school where Habibah and Agnes work (see cameos 3, 4 and 6). The differences in their skill-set are clear, and yet their classrooms are just a few metres apart. This absence of knowledge and skill-sharing also suggests a reason why Habibah and Agnes's professional values are so different, despite working in the same context. Most teachers do not have the time, the incentives or the channels to share new

knowledge or skills (or professional functionings) with each other. This does not appear to be valued by them and the reasons for this are, in part, related to the fact that they are rural women.

This study has highlighted how a key benefit of teaching for women is the time it enables them to spend with their families and doing household chores. The only times the teachers could share their professional skills are during break-times or after school, and these periods are highly valued because they can be used to visit their children or undertake chores. For Habibah and Sabeera, who live and work in the same village, this is especially the case. This supports the findings of other studies of women teachers in low income countries, Sales (1999:417), for example, found that women teachers in Pakistan were 'unwilling to take on a job that demands precedence over the rest of their life'. Most of the teachers in this study, but particularly Sabeera and Habibah, would be unable rather than unwilling to take on a job that could not be combined with their other duties. Interestingly, being exposed to examples of good practice and working with inspiring teachers are two of the teacher-generated functionings, but the teachers did not see this relationship as reciprocal; their own practice was confined to their classrooms and conducted in relative privacy.

Dunne et al (2007) have highlighted how Sub-Saharan Africa women's participation in the teaching profession is constrained by their domestic duties, this study found that these duties also influence teachers' values, agency and the choices they make in their work. This was especially the case for Sabeera, Habibah and Cecilia whose family arrangements were more traditional, but family commitments and priorities also restricted the agency and influenced the professional choices of Ruth, Nomfundo, Agnes and Mandisa despite their different domestic arrangements.

Lumby et al (2011:11) found that South African head teachers' experiences of motherhood acted as a 'means of self-development' in their work. Similarly the teachers in this study attributed their professional values and their achievement of capabilities to their experiences of motherhood and their experiences of and familiarity with rural livelihoods, far more than they attributed it to their initial teacher education or subsequent courses. Professional development is seen as an effective and desirable means of moving up the career ladder, securing promotions and salary increases and enhancing professional status among their colleagues and their community. However, the data suggests not only that the teachers' experiences of the intersection between gender and rurality contribute as much to the development of their professional capabilities than these formal courses, but that the impact of these courses is often dependent on the intersection of gender and rurality and the consequent limitations on or enhancements to teacher agency.

#### **7.4 Insights into the use of the capability approach**

Section 7.3 suggested how the capability approach facilitated insights into the empirical literature around teachers' work and professional values. This section looks at this relationship in reverse by suggesting insights into the theoretical understandings and application of the capability approach that have been facilitated by its use to understand these empirical issues.

Chapter 2 outlined the list debate in the capability approach and aligned this study with Sen rather than Nussbaum, that is, that the lists of professional capabilities against which the teachers' agency was evaluated were generated by the data rather than drawing on a

more general, pre-determined list. This section returns to a consideration of the lists of capabilities and functionings generated by this study and raises some questions about the usefulness of this approach and how it challenges notions of teachers' contractual responsibilities and freedom.

It was set out in chapter 2 how, just because this study sought to understand teachers' professional values and understand their agency to pursue and achieve valued functionings, it was not arguing that teachers should have the freedom to do just what they want in their work. Rather it sought to reach a better understanding of why (as the literature implies) they often appear not to pursue what is valued officially. The study found that, predominantly, teachers are not choosing not to pursue officially valued functionings because they conflict with their own values but because they do not have the agency freedom to do so. The question of who should determine what teachers do, however, remains and this section explores this question through a capability lens.

The contested nature of capability selection has been acknowledged by Sen (2009) and this study has added weight to his suggestion that conflicts may arise between individually and collectively identified capabilities and those defined by different scales and levels of abstraction (Sen, 1998 in Tikly and Barrett, 2011). Few empirical studies, however, acknowledge or deal with this conflict. Professional capabilities for teachers differed across the data sources drawn on in this study. These differences provide an interesting platform from which to explore the question of who should determine what teachers do.

In considering the prioritisation of the official list of capabilities it is useful to draw on Nussbaum's (2003) justification for universal lists of human well-being, what Claassen

(2011) defines as the philosophical approach. Nussbaum argues for a set list of capabilities for social justice but her point is also relevant here:

‘If capabilities are to be used in advancing a conception of social justice, they will obviously have to be specified... Either a society has a conception of basic justice or it does not. If it has one we need to know what its content is and what opportunities and liberties it takes to be fundamental entitlements of all citizens. One cannot have a conception of social justice that says, simply, ‘All citizens are entitled to freedom understood as a capability... [s]uch a blanket endorsement of freedom/capability as a goal would be hopelessly vague’. (Nussbaum, 2003:46-7)

On the one hand, if education is compulsory, and the purpose of education is to advance and enhance national development (see Hanushek and Wossmann, 2007 and chapter 4 of this study), governments must determine the content and aspirations of this development and teachers, as government employees, have a responsibility to pursue this content (functionings) and these aspirations (capabilities) in their work. However, a key word in Nussbaum’s quote is ‘entitlements’. Using a capabilities framework to understand teachers’ work is not to replace the word competences with functionings, it is to reconsider and re-imagine responsibilities and opportunities in teachers’ work. Functionings that lead to national development are beings and doings that are made possible through the freedom to pursue capabilities. Official professional capabilities, then, can be seen as entitlements that governments should ensure that teachers are able to pursue.

To argue for the implementation of an official list of professional capabilities for teachers, therefore, is only valid if governments can ensure that teachers are equal with respect to the effective freedoms associated with this list (Cohen, 1993; Gasper, 2003) and have the

agency to pursue the listed capabilities. It could be argued that teachers who have agency to pursue these capabilities should be contractually obliged to do so, but this argument only holds if teachers do have this agency. Chapter 6 showed that (largely) the teachers in this study do not, and so the argument for insisting that teachers only adhere to an official list of professional capabilities is currently moot. If teachers' work is viewed through a capability framework, therefore, governments could only insist that teachers acted in a certain way if they could guarantee that teachers had equal freedom to make the choice to act in a certain way. A 'fundamental' aspect of Sen's capability approach is 'judging institutions according to whether or not they enable human beings – in all of their complexity and diversity – to flourish' (Alkire, 2002:17). If governments insisted that the official list of professional capabilities for teachers was prioritised over teachers' valued capabilities, teachers – in all their complexity and diversity – would need to be enabled to pursue these capabilities. Tilak (2002) and Barrett and Tikly (2010) define poverty as capability deprivation. If governments do not enable the fundamental entitlements of all teachers to pursue official professional capabilities it can be argued that they are contributing to their professional impoverishment.

Of course this is an abstract argument that assumes first that governments should have complete control over the entitlements and agency of civil servants and secondly that complete control is feasible. This study has made visible some of the complex intersections of geography, culture and gender that underline and inform the teachers' lives. It has also shown how these informal institutions have - in several areas - a greater impact on the teachers' professional values and agency than the more formal institutions at the national level from which the official perspectives in this study are drawn. There are limits, therefore, to what national governments can do to enable teachers' entitlements to official professional capabilities, particularly in decentralised education systems. It is,

perhaps, the acknowledgement of these limits as the point at which governments could work with and within these more informal institutions to alleviate teachers' professional poverty that is the useful insight to emerge from this argument.

To counter this top-down perspective it is also interesting to put forward a case for prioritising the teacher-generated list. Chapters 4, 5 and 6 showed that not only do teachers not have the agency freedom to pursue official functionings, they are not always relevant to teachers working in rural schools and are not ideal or appropriate in rural classrooms. In addition, these chapters showed that teachers valued, pursued and achieved functionings and capabilities that did not feature in the official documents but that appeared to be genuinely beneficial for the communities in which they taught. Because these are directed towards the well-being of the pupils and are valued solely because they are understood to enhance their learning opportunities, it is realistic to argue that they are valid capabilities: they are 'reasoned' (Unterhalter et al, 2007:13) and shaped by the teachers' 'operational conception of the common good' (Alkire and Black, 1997:273). The term 'operational' is important here. The analysis highlighted a cyclical relationship between values, functionings and agency of teachers: the teacher-generated functionings draw on their experiences of what they feel is needed in their communities, but also on their understandings of what is possible.

However, this study assumed that teachers would be spokespeople for the values of the communities in which they teach. This appeared only to be the case for some of the teachers. Habibah, Sabeera and Mandisa had close professional and personal relationships with the community and their values were shaped by these relationships. Nomfundo, Cecilia, Ruth and Agnes, however, had limited contact with the community and the analysis suggested that their values were shaped by the absence of this close contact.

This not only raises the question of how teachers could better understand what communities want and need for their children but also suggests that using teachers' valued functionings and capabilities to inform policy is useful, but not sufficient in itself if the goals are quality education and democratic social justice.

While it is clear that prioritising either of the lists is not ideal, neither does (without extensive further empirical work) the more commonly adopted strategy of combining the lists to produce a composite list of mutually valued capabilities seem appropriate. Chapter 5 demonstrated how limited the list of mutually valued functionings for this study was and how, taken independently, lacked clearly valuable aspects of teaching from both perspectives.

Instead the findings of this study point towards the argument that creating one final list of teacher professional capabilities is not only unworkable, it is not necessarily useful and, I argue, not necessary. Chapter 2 detailed the existing list debate in the capability literature which revolves around 'how the philosopher relates to the polis' (Claassen, 2011:492). Claassen accepts that philosophers do not have the legitimacy to make lists and are also often 'badly placed to devise such lists', yet concludes that the philosophical position is the 'legitimate' one (p.491). Although his argument is concerned with philosophers and general populations and the discussion in this section concerns governments and teachers, some relevant insights can be drawn from his discussion.

Claassen argues that the distinction between the two positions is gradual rather than categorical. His dissatisfaction with how the positions are often considered 'mutually exclusive' (p.496) is relevant here. First it is interesting to explore how the official perspective in this thesis is situated in relation to the philosophical or democratic position:



this is not clear cut. On the one hand it represents a democratic position, since the official capabilities were extrapolated through considered, justified and, therefore, 'legitimate' means (Robeyns, 2005b:201) to represent shared valued functionings across the five countries. Yet Claassen claims the philosophical position represents 'the most enlightened theories it can come up with' (2011:506). Chapter 4 showed how the valued functionings extrapolated from the official data resonate with the values embedded in the EFA and MDG agendas – arguably (from a global perspective) the most 'enlightened' – or at least the most widely accepted – theories of good quality education currently available<sup>62</sup>. In this way the official perspective can also be considered to represent a philosophical position.

In relation to this, chapter 5 showed how the teachers' perspective drew on the realities and interpretations of rural communities, but also on their understandings of what was expected of them by their governments (particularly the teachers who had recently undertaken professional development programmes). Chapter 6 showed how even when the teachers' values and official values differed, they often pursued (or attempted to pursue) the functionings associated with these official values because of their contractual responsibilities to do so. The insertion of policy into the philosophy/polis spectrum that Claassen depicts blurs even further the boundaries between what is valued (and by whom), what is pursued and what is achieved and, therefore, challenges the legitimacy of either perspective when considered independently of the others.

Acknowledgement of these overlaps appears particularly relevant in a study of professional capabilities. The analysis showed that some capabilities extrapolated from the official documents do not resonate with the realities of teaching in rural schools, especially

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<sup>62</sup> The ideas around quality education 'as stated in the Dakar goals of Education for All in 2000... are a universal and internationally agreed upon right for everyone' (UNESCO, 2007a:2).

as it is experienced by female teachers. The national governments, therefore, appear to be (as do philosophers) to some extent 'badly placed' to devise such lists. However, unlike philosophers, national governments do have the *legitimacy* to devise these lists because they employ the teachers.

Mills (1956, in Lukes, 2005:3) claimed: 'The voice of the professional understructure may have something to say about policy but it usually goes unheeded. The flow of information is downward in larger volume than it is upward'. Claassen argues that the philosophical position gives people 'something to digest (2011:502). The empirical application of the capability approach in this study has signalled key themes that matter to teachers in relation to their professional capabilities and, therefore, that are relevant to teacher and education policy in Sub-Saharan Africa. This study argues that while neither the official or teacher-generated perspectives can be considered to produce the *only* or the 'legitimate' list, clarifying and debating these perspectives offers 'something to digest' in both directions. Democratic approaches to determining capabilities, therefore, provide an information base from which the 'upward flow' of information can be strengthened in the ongoing process of policy formulation.

Imagining a more even flow of information between teachers and governments also supports the 'possibility of progress in social understanding' which is denied by reliance on a 'fixed forever list of capabilities' (Sen, 2004:80) and points towards another reason for declining to compile a composite list of professional capabilities for teachers. This reason relates to the debate in the capability approach around adaptive or adapted preferences. Adapted preferences, as discussed in chapter 2, are when a person's subjective choices are shaped and informed by the society they live in (Nussbaum, 2000). They are often presented as a negative concept and used to illustrate deprivation and, in the face of this

deprivation, the adjustment of valued functionings in the direction of realistic possibilities (Qizilbash, 1997). They are most commonly discussed in terms of women's lives and capabilities and the adjustment of women's valued functionings in the face of embedded gender norms that limit their opportunities (Sen and Nussbaum, 1993; Walker and Unterhalter, 2007).

This understanding of adapted preferences, as a response to deprivation, has relevance to this study. The data has shown, for example how Habibah and Sabeera's opportunities for formal employment are limited by the strictly gendered social norms in their communities. Their enthusiasm for and commitment to the teaching profession (which is their only realistic professional opportunity) could well be interpreted in this way. Agnes's dogmatic focus on punctuality and Cecilia's decision to specialise in early childhood education because this is the cheapest professional development programme available are clear examples of how their desires have adjusted in the direction of realistic possibilities. Nomfundo's shift in values from seeing herself as someone who can mobilise external support to deal with pupils with special needs to valuing her role as supporting these pupils as best she can within the classroom could be interpreted in this way too. The data, therefore, could provide rich insights into the limited professional opportunities for rural women in Sub-Saharan Africa and this could be an interesting avenue for further analysis. However, as chapter 2 made clear this study has aimed not to simply reinforce existing understandings of gender and deprivation, but offer alternative ways of viewing women's professional experiences. Through a focus on professional capabilities, therefore, this study suggests that adapted preferences can be interpreted in a different – and not necessarily negative – way.

In fact, for the teachers in this study, adapted preferences can be interpreted as representing a professional development of sorts. The alignment (or adaptation) of the teachers' professional values with what is officially valued follows their trajectory of formal professional development programmes.

For Ruth, Sabeera and Habibah there is a cyclical effect between the values that lead them to pursue further professional development and the influence of professional development programmes on their professional values. In the second field visits to Ghana, Sudan and Nigeria (in 2009, 2010 and 2011 respectively) all three talked passionately and articulately about the importance of lesson planning, the use of teaching aids and resources and ideas around small group teaching (for example) – aspects which were not mentioned or poorly understood in the first field visit. As chapter 4 showed these aspects are highly valued in these countries and are taught in the diploma programmes the teachers were enrolled on. Rather than something to be avoided, therefore, the enabling of adapted preferences could be a valuable pursuit for governments interested in enhancing teachers' professional capabilities.

However, while using a capability-framed analysis has shown that successful professional development is likely to develop or adapt a teacher's ideas about what is valued in their work so that these values are more aligned with those which are valued officially, professional development does not necessarily develop their agency to pursue these values, nor does it necessarily provide impetus to choose to pursue these values even if they are free to do so. Ruth and Sabeera, for example, are studying for a Diploma in Education at the University of Cape Coast and the Open University of Sudan respectively, but often choose, in their rural classrooms, not to put what they learn into practice.

In addition, attending professional development programmes without having the necessary support afterwards appeared to contribute negatively to the teachers' enthusiasm for the changes these programmes initiated. Knowing about different techniques but being unable to action them causes embarrassment among the teachers and they often choose instead to stick to what they feel comfortable with. Therefore even if teachers value something, or appreciate the value of something, if they do not have courage or confidence to pursue it then they may not be able to achieve the corresponding capability (Sen, 1993). Having the skill but not having the confidence to put the skill into practice has the same end result (a deprived professional capability) as not having the skill in the first place. Professional development programmes may adapt teachers' preferences in the direction of officially valued capabilities, but the challenges of working in a rural classroom appear to counter much of the influence they could have on teachers' agency freedom to pursue and achieve related functionings. In terms of developing teachers' skills and abilities in line with official agendas, therefore, a consideration of adaptive agency as it relates to adaptive preferences may be important empirically as well as representing a new direction in capability theorising.

To unite the lists, therefore also implies that the teachers' values are static and independent of the official values when the data and analysis has shown that this is far from the case. It ignores the blurring of the official and teacher perspectives outlined above and the fact that teachers' (and governments') values change and adapt over time. Collecting data over a period of five years (between 2007 and 2011) demonstrated how the teachers' values changed both because of and in spite of changes to their professional circumstances. Often, because the teachers had (over this time period) attended further professional development programmes, their values had shifted in the direction of the official values and away from their earlier more personal interpretations of what a teacher

should be and do. There were translations, of course, the values were not simply added onto their list but incorporated into their own repertoire of values and experiences, but there was a definite increase in resonance with the official values across the data. The values of Nomfundo, Agnes, Cecilia and Mandisa (who had not attended professional development programmes during the research) developed too, but in accordance with their changing personal circumstances and changing circumstances within the school rather than in the direction of officially valued functionings.

The notions of increasingly, or decreasingly, adaptive preferences and adaptive agency raises the question of how independent the three categories that have made up the three levels of analysis really are. For clarity – and for comparison – the official, teacher-generated and individual values were identified and dealt with separately throughout the analysis. Maintaining the separateness of the teacher-generated and individual lists, however, implies that they are independent of one another, when this is clearly not the case. Sen (2009) asserts the importance of understanding why people think, choose and do certain things and understanding how these activities are linked to their societal relations. In this study the teachers think, choose and do certain things because they draw on aspects of their personal lives and beliefs, but they also think, choose and do certain things because they are teachers and they understand the obligations of choosing to act in a certain way and because the personal and professional contexts within which they work enable and restrict agency and achievement at different times. It is already understood in the capabilities and education literature that ‘social opportunities and norms expand human agency or diminish it’ (Walker and Unterhalter, 2007:9). This study has shown how the teachers’ values, agency and choices are fluid and that this fluidity is in part due to constantly changing social opportunities and norms, even in traditional and rural communities.

The teachers appear to navigate their personal and professional contexts in order to define their own valued functionings. Often these functionings are dependent on what the teachers perceive to be possible at a certain time; teachers' preferences are in a constant state of adaptation. So too is the field of policy under investigation: conflicts and tensions in the national perspectives were noted in chapter 4. Keeping the values and analysis of agency separate was methodologically useful but in reality it is very difficult to discretely compartmentalise or define valued functionings as either individual or official without implying that teachers' professional experiences are also static. This study has shown that this is far from the case. This is a further argument, therefore, for not attempting to unite the lists, nor arguing for the legitimacy of one over another.

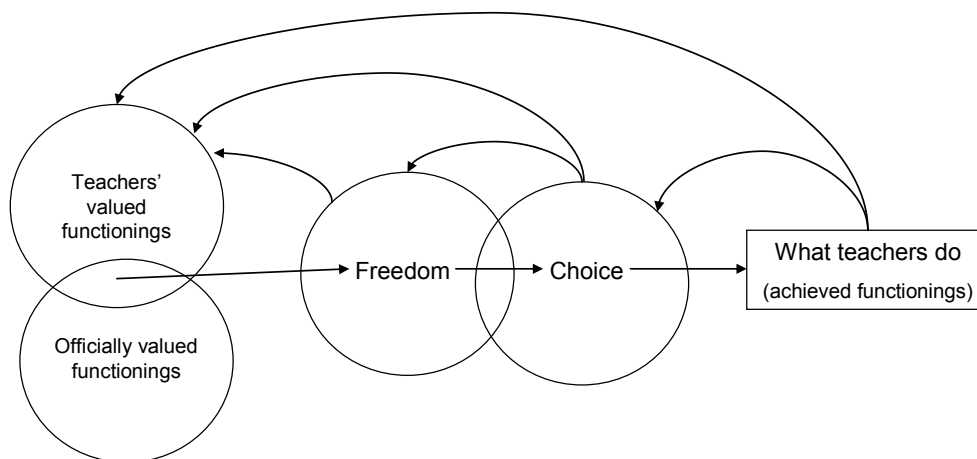
This leads to a reconsideration of the 'vexing problem' Binder and Coad (2011:328) of the way the key concepts in the capability approach are related to one another. Their focus is on the tangled relationship between functionings and resources which they argue is 'conceptually clear but empirically less clear'. They argue that there is circularity between these concepts that has not been effectively dealt with in the capabilities literature. I suggest that there is circularity and entanglement between other aspects of the capability approach too. This study has revealed cyclical entanglements between the teachers' values, agency and choices.

The capability approach 'allows us to think of human beings in a dynamic frame in which they are constantly involved in the process of becoming themselves and realising themselves' (Giovanola, 2005:251). However, existing diagrammatic representations of the capability approach do not represent a dynamic frame: they are predominantly reproductions or adaptations of Robeyns' (2005a) model – which is linear - and, therefore

implies a one-directional relationship between values, agency and choice, and achieved functionings<sup>63</sup>. The findings of this study have pointed towards the possibility that capabilities develop in cycles and that there is a need to model this circularity. The next section proposes what such a model might look like in terms of teachers' professional capabilities.

## 7.5 Towards a model of teachers' professional capability

The combined theoretical and empirical insights derived from the analyses of teachers' professional capabilities in this study have enabled the formulation of the model in figure 7.1. It shows what teachers do in their work – their achieved functionings – are not static, nor are they necessarily the final outcome, and nor is the process of achieving functionings linear. Instead, the path to achieved functionings appears to be dynamic and cyclical.



**Figure 7.1 A model of teachers' professional capability**

<sup>63</sup> See for example Beyazit (2011) and Tao (2009).



Two Venn diagrams appear in the model. The first, on the left, represents how what the teachers' value in their work is influenced by what is valued officially (both through an awareness of the government's expectations of them and the development of this awareness through professional development programmes). The Venn diagram on the right represents the difficulty, described in chapter 6, of differentiating freedom from choice: in the analysis of the teachers' lives, freedom and choice often overlapped.

The horizontal arrows show that there is a linear relationship between what teachers value and what they do, but the curved arrows show how this relationship is not always straightforward. Teachers' valued functionings do not exist in a vacuum but are influenced by what they feel they are able to do in their work and by the choices they make in their work. The curved arrows represent teachers' adaptive preferences and adaptive agency as they change over time in response to the environments and contexts they are working in (both local and official) and the possibilities and limitations these changing contexts place on their agency and choices.

The proposed utility of this model, and what it could mean for how educational governance operates in relation to teachers in Sub-Saharan Africa, is discussed in the next and final chapter.

## *Cameo 7 Adoption*

(Isibane School, South Africa, 8<sup>th</sup> August, 2007)

### **Can you tell me about how you adopted your daughter?**

Actually it was not my intention to adopt her. What happened she was doing grade 4 here in 2004 and she got very sick and was hospitalised. By then I knew she was HIV positive. She was so sick she could not sit or stand, it was as if her spinal cord was somehow affected. Later on, in October, I discovered that her mother had a drinking problem.

In December I met a neighbour of theirs who asked me to assist them because this lady was drinking heavily and they were worried this little one was going to die. So I phoned the social worker and asked if I could take her home for the holidays. I wanted to feed her so she could gain some weight and strength. But unfortunately she felt that it was not necessary. As far as she was concerned this girl's mother was a responsible person who was always there when she visited. But she didn't know the whole story because I learned on from people on the street that this lady would take this little one to shebeens exposing her not only to danger but also to cold.

Then on Christmas Eve one of the neighbours phoned me and said that this one is going to die of diarrhoea and the mother is not even aware that she is suffering as she is drinking heavily. By the time I got there the mother had passed out. So we took the girl to hospital and it was only the next day that the mother realised that her child was not with her.

When the social worker came back from the holidays she asked me to look after the girl for three months. At the time I was busy working for my master's but I agreed because I thought it was only going to be for three months and I would be able to catch up after that. But she was so ill she was admitted three times to the hospital with tuberculosis, every time in a critical condition. She was too weak to be started on the ARV programme, and she could not be put on both tuberculosis treatment and ARVs so we had to forgo the ARVs but I would give her vitamins that are very good at boosting ones immunity system, they boosted it by 37% in 20 days. And I think that is what saved her more than anything else. There was no one else to administer these treatments, her mother died that February so she literally had no one. So I adopted her and three months ended up being forever.

## Chapter 8 The educational governance of female teachers in rural Sub-Saharan African schools: Reflections and conclusions

### 8.1 Introduction

This concluding chapter draws together the findings of the study to answer the final research question: To what extent could the capability approach influence the way educational governance operates in relation to teachers? Section 8.2 depicts the findings in policy-relevant terms. Section 8.3 re-considers the model of teachers' professional capabilities presented in chapter 7. It brings the model 'to life' (Darling-Hammond, 1990:340) by incorporating the empirical findings of the study and considering its relevance, possibilities and limits in the educational governance of female teachers in Sub-Saharan Africa. Section 8.4 concludes the thesis by suggesting how the findings of this study could lead to further investigative work around the professional lives of teachers.

### 8.2 Teachers' professional capabilities and educational governance

At the World Education Forum in Dakar in 2000 the international community pledged to develop systems of educational governance that were more participatory and more responsive to local needs and interests (UNESCO, 2007a). In terms of the educational governance of teachers, chapter 2 revealed the common view that teacher policies continue to be designed by male elites in urban, centralised contexts, draw predominantly on statistical analyses and often have little resonance with what is going on in classrooms (Bonnet and Pontefract, 2008; Buckler, 2011; Harley et al, 2000; Lewin, 2002). This

study's analysis of official documents around teachers, published in the wake of this public pledge, adds support to this view.

It is important to point out, however, that this thesis is not arguing that teachers' perspectives should drive policy formulation – a notion that has been called 'politically naïve' and 'pedagogically ill-informed' (Jansen, 2001:246). Rather it supports the argument for more democratic participation in the development of education policy presented in the social justice literature, and for educational governance which 'recognises and reflects the identities and needs of different groups' (Barrett and Tikly, 2010:10). This thesis has addressed the field of educational governance around teachers in Sub-Saharan Africa through a focus on an issue relevant to policy formulation (i.e. how to reach a better understanding about what is valued in teachers' work), through a participatory approach, and with the intention of 'assisting a process of change in a positive direction' (Thomas, 2007:12). This section presents some possible areas in which a process of change could be considered.

### ***8.2.1 Depiction of teachers and the professional contexts in which they work***

There is a strong tendency in the official documents to depict teachers as 'good' or 'bad', 'motivated' or 'de-motivated', 'committed' or 'lazy', 'good quality' or 'poor quality'. The analysis in this study suggests that such polarisation can distort understandings of the professional lives of teachers. The study has also suggested that the emphasis on the negative extremes of such polarisation creates a discourse around teachers, particularly in the media, which can be unrepresentative of many teachers and fails to acknowledge or engage with the more complex shifts in teachers' behaviour and abilities across different teaching tasks and goals or over time.

While rurality receives little attention in the official documents, where it is mentioned it is depicted in predominantly negative terms and it is maintained that teachers dislike teaching there. Chapter 5 suggested that the teachers disliked being disconnected from the things that matter to them. If these things are in, or accessible from, rural environments they are not as negatively perceived as is suggested. The documents also depict a dichotomy between urban and rural teaching environments. The teachers in this study rarely spoke about the geography of schools in this way; rather they imagined a continuum between rural and urban locations differentiating, for example, between schools in the 'town', on the 'outskirts', 'village schools' and 'bush schools'. Chapters 5 and 6 suggested how the teachers' values and their agency are shaped by their perceptions of where they work on this continuum and by their understandings of the specific needs of pupils and communities within these fluid – not discrete - geographical categories. When considering the educational governance of rural schools within a social justice perspective it appears important not to focus on what distinguishes them from urban schools, but on what makes them distinctive in their own right.

In the officially valued functionings teachers are expected to treat all pupils equally, but teach them according to their individual needs. For most of the teachers in this study, however, it is necessary to recognise and respond to the range of poverty among their pupils before attempting to teach them. Without responding to their poorer pupils' basic needs - providing food, clothes and equipment - it would be difficult to treat these pupils equally. Without food, clothes or equipment many would not be in school in the first place, would be too tired or cold to concentrate, or would not be able to participate in lessons. In a way, then, these behaviours that appear to conflict with official capabilities actually facilitate them: teachers are acting in a redistributive capacity to ensure equality in their classrooms. The teachers, however, did not articulate these behaviours in this way. Their

explanations drew predominantly on their innate responses to child poverty, the alleviation of immediate suffering and the provision of a better future. They related these responses to their identities as mothers.

This study has suggested ways in which teachers' gender can intersect with their values, agency and the choices they make in their work. Yet an acknowledgement of teacher gender is almost completely absent in the official documents analysed: they are largely gender neutral. The evidence presented in this thesis suggests that they should be less so, however, it is important that gender is not incorporated simply to add a further polarisation to the articulation around teachers' professional experiences. To 'gender' the language of policy simply by differentiating the experiences of male and female teachers may further embed the prevailing notion of the 'double burden' faced by female, rural teachers. Rather it is more important that the discourse within official documents reflects the understanding that teachers' genders and geographical locations may influence their work differently at different times.

This is especially important in the relatively recent drive to increase the number of female teachers in rural schools with the intention of ensuring 'a representative number of positive role models for girls and boys' (Mpokosa and Ndaruhutse, 2009:11). While there is evidence to suggest that this can have a positive impact on the attendance and achievement of girls and boys (Maazou, 2009; UNESCO, 2001; 2011) it has also been suggested that equitable teacher distribution does not guarantee equal gender rights for pupils (Kirk, 2006). The findings of this study support Kirk's suggestion and challenge the 'one size fits all' model of social justice that focuses on the redistribution of resources and remains 'detached from the particularities of... social life' (Cuervo, 2012:85). Presenting female teachers as 'resources' in the project of gender equality in schools, even under the

banner of social justice, fails to acknowledge the complex intersections of gender, geography and culture that have been revealed by this study.

### ***8.2.2 Management of teachers***

Using a capability framework to explore teachers' professional lives has provided insights into how teachers are managed at the national, local and school level, and how aspects of this management influence their values as well as their agency and motivation to pursue these values.

First, it is interesting to consider the receipt and interpretation of policies for teachers, by teachers. Receipt of policies – or their translation through circulars – is the teachers' primary input of information about what is officially valued in their work. It is widely accepted that these documents often fail to reach teachers (Palmer Development Group 1999; Sumra, 2004; VSO, 2002; 2009). Others have explored how teachers interpret and respond to new policies (Barrett, 2008; Welmond, 2004). This study found that there is a gap between teachers' perceptions of how familiar they were with official policies and their actual level of awareness of them. While only Ruth felt that her school missed out on receiving circulars, or received them later than schools closer to the education office, the analysis of the teachers' agency to pursue official capabilities found that a key factor that limited their agency was, quite simply, that they do not know about them.

When the teachers do receive new policies or instructions, they question their relevance, doubt their permanence or suspect they will be unsupported in dealing with them. They express reluctance to engage fully with them. This is, in part, to do with the often over-ambitious claims made by documents that the teachers feel are irrelevant in their contexts.

Nigeria's Education Sector Situation Analysis (DocN4/2006) recognised this and claimed that in existing policy documents 'goals, objectives and strategies are not adequately prioritised or matched to available budgets... [and] are often too vague and too ambitious at all levels of the education system' (p.8). Yet Nigeria's National Framework for Education (DocN5/2006), also published by the Federal Ministry of Education in the same year, outlined plans to 'to attract, develop, train, motivate and retain high calibre teachers and other staff to accommodate increase in enrolment figures and enhance the level of learning outcomes', 'provide high quality teaching and learning' and 'improve the working environment by providing offices, laboratories, libraries, staffrooms, classrooms to facilitate the work of all categories of staff' (p.25).

The teachers in this study, even those with qualifications that exceeded the minimum standard, struggle to enact many of these vague and ambitious objectives. Ghana's Action Plan to EFA (DocG1/2002/Lvii), for example, claims that the lack of library periods and creative arts subjects such as Art, Music and Dance are militating against the provision of effective education and 'should be prominent on school timetables' (p.xxiii). An excerpt from my field-notes from the first field visit to Ghana reads:

'Break is over but the teachers are still sitting on the veranda. I ask what lessons will happen now. They look at each other and shrug. One suggests I go and check the timetable. I do, it says 'Music'. I tell the teachers and they burst out laughing, "ok, that means a free lesson then."' (Field-notes, Ghana, Friday 9<sup>th</sup> March, 2007)

Music was prominent on the timetable, as the policy advised, but the school had no musical instruments, no Music curriculum, no qualified Music teachers and no one to check whether or not Music lessons took place. In fact, at Nkyen, having Music on the



timetable militates against the provision of effective education because it limits the number of lessons that take place each week.

Despite policymakers' desire for 'swift adoption' and 'swift change' in teachers' work (Cohen and Ball, 1990:337), the analysis suggested that the teachers in this study feel detached from new policies and a 'business as usual' approach is often prioritised. This study has found that the results of a study of South African teachers' responses to education policies, published a decade ago, still seem to hold true. Harley et al (2000) found that 'teachers are left with the task of collation and little hope of developing an in-depth, unified view of policy and its implications' (p.301). This study shows that this task of collation is like a jigsaw. The official documents imply that teachers have all of the pieces, yet teachers do not, nor do they have the box which contains the 'finished picture'. However, while others have suggested that teachers fill in gaps in understandings of their role with a dogmatic focus on pupils' performance in standardised tests (see Darling-Hammond (1990) for a summary of this literature) - 'especially when the tests are the basis for important decisions about students or schools' (p.343) - the teachers in this study piece together the official functionings they know and feel able to achieve, and fill in the gaps with their own achievable functionings, in line with their own sense of professional capabilities.

In fact, the pursuit of high grades for pupils is not a key valued objective for the teachers in this study. Pupil grades were only found to be prioritised as a value for Cecilia. This is surprising because in the five focus countries schools are ranked according to this criterion, but the teachers' values appeared to relate more to the processes of teaching rather than the outcomes. The teachers had confidence in their ability to teach in a way they thought was appropriate but were less confident, or less interested, in how this would

translate into improved grades for their pupils. Again, with the exception of Cecilia (whose school did consistently well in local league tables), the teachers seemed unconcerned by these tables as long as they felt that they were doing what they could to ensure the best learning experiences for their pupils (which may or may not be academic). This is another example of how the teachers' values are focused locally – bounded by the school and community – rather than focussed nationally.

Secondly, analysis of how the teachers' values were influenced by their agency (or lack of) to pursue official functionings found instead that the teachers responded in one of two ways. Either they interpreted their lack of agency to pursue official functionings as an invitation to freely pursue their own functionings, or it sparked a sense of value inertia where they dramatically limited their own sense of valued functionings for fear of pursuing the wrong functionings or pursuing the official functionings incorrectly. Darling-Hammond claims that 'policies do not land in a vacuum, they land on top of other policies' (1990:346). This study has shown how, when teachers are working in contexts where contact with education officials is rare and where policies are rarely followed up, they also land on a complex bedrock of entrenched school cultures and teachers' own established, practised and achievable valued functionings that is overlain with teachers' changing practices and values.

In terms of teachers adopting official values, professional development programmes appear to be a more effective means of translating these values and embedding them within the teachers' own perspectives of what is valuable in their work. Chapters 5 and 6 showed how the values of the teachers attending professional development programmes aligned more with the official values. However, chapter 6 also showed that these shifts in values were not necessarily accompanied by shifts in teachers' agency to pursue and

achieve these valued objectives. This resonates with the work of Pardo and Kersten (2006), whose research into teachers in America suggested that teacher preparation courses need to focus on the development of policy-interpretation and implementation skills so that teachers can understand how new policies resonate with their individual contexts and make rational and informed decisions about how to implement them effectively. This study has shown that this is not only important in initial teacher education, but must also be embedded in locally and culturally relevant professional development programmes so that teachers develop agency to pursue, as well as awareness of, officially valued objectives.

There is a further element to this discussion, however, that the data and analysis of this study has revealed. The implication in the paragraph above is that the ultimate goal is for teachers to be able to value, and effectively implement, officially valued functionings exactly as they are intended to be implemented. While enhancing teachers' agency to pursue and achieve these functionings is important, it is also important for policy makers to understand that, and acknowledge the ways in which, these functionings may be translated or interpreted for the teachers' own contexts, and understand also that these interpretations may have positive effects on pupil learning and development that may not be recognised in official policy.

The re-interpretation of policies by teachers, based on their pre-existing practice, knowledge and beliefs has been acknowledged in high income (Cohen and Ball, 1990; Darling-Hammond, 1990; Pardo and Kersten, 2006) and Sub-Saharan African contexts (Barrett, 2008; Dunne et al, 2007; Harley et al, 2000). Dunne et al (2007) also highlight the translation of policies and initiatives as they move down through (especially decentralised) education systems. Local education officials are one conduit between these national

initiatives and the teachers. If the teachers are not enrolled on professional development programmes, their relationship with these officials is often their only personal connection to the formal education system. However, the analysis suggested that these relationships can do little to change or challenge teachers' view of their work or of their interpretation of policies and guidelines. Supervisors attending lessons I was observing always gave positive feedback to the teachers. In my field-notes from the second field visit to Nigeria is the transcription of a conversation between a supervisor and a teacher:

**Supervisor:** So everything was good, very good, yes yes, there are no complaints...

**Teacher:** And the lesson notes?

**Supervisor:** Yes, yes, I have checked all that I need and it all tallies.

(excerpt from field-notes, 14<sup>th</sup> February 2011)

Two days later I interviewed an education official:

'You see, when it comes to theory [teachers] are very good... but where they have problems is on the aspect of practicals. They go through the theory but they ignore the practical and that is a big problem... And when it comes to the supervision this present crop of supervisors will say ok, bring your lesson notes, bring your syllabus and they will compare. And it will tally because it always tallies whether the teacher has done the teaching or not and if it didn't tally because the teacher had made a decision to do something differently the supervisor would ask why and the teachers would not know how to defend this decision. So they always tally and the supervisor will always be satisfied.' (EON2b/2011)

These findings support Dunne et al's (2007) assertion that supervision practices in Sub-Saharan African schools 'fail to inculcate any sense of accountability in teachers' (p.16). The supervisory practices captured in the data for this study also suggest that supervisors can fail to provide teachers with an accurate sense of how they are doing (e.g. how effectively they are achieving officially valued objectives). This finding contrasts with the aims of Nigerian teacher education policy which states 'a key focus will be the firm implementation of minimum standards using effective and efficient supervisory and monitoring mechanisms' (DocN5/2011:34). Supervisors in all five countries, who had often not received additional or specific training, seemed concerned about hurting teachers' feelings and lacked agency to develop teachers' practice. When they did make suggestions as to how teachers could improve their practice there was little follow-up. Cecilia expressed surprise that a supervisor had told her that she could use a range of text books to plan her lessons. When asked if she intended to try this she admitted she did not know how to access these additional texts. Supervisors could play a key role in persuading teachers there is a need to develop their practice, and support them to do so, but this study suggests that they may currently not be empowered, or have agency, to do so.

So too a lack of agency appeared to pervade the whole education system; interviewees from the teacher level to senior policy makers expressed a sense of futility in pursuing valued objectives – there was always someone higher up who had the final say:

'Occasionally [teachers and supervisors] come to me. All I have to say is alright, I hear what you are saying but I will talk about that to my own principals, then I go to the director and he does something about it, or he doesn't do anything about it. And I just moan, nothing else.' (EOSA1/2010)

Given how much the teachers' valued being able to air grievances through effective channels, and how all of them lacked agency to pursue this functioning, addressing this pervasive lack (or perceived lack) of agency throughout the whole system seems important.

### ***8.2.3 Teacher effectiveness and motivation***

Chapter 2 showed how the management of teacher effectiveness and motivation is an important aspect of educational governance. Questions around what teachers do and why have also dominated the literature around teachers' professional lives. A recent Transparency International Study of teachers in South Africa (TI, 2011) calls for an investigation of the reasons educators 'disregard known rules' (p.43). Because this study analysed both official and teacher perspectives into professional capabilities, it can offer some insights here, and into teacher effectiveness and motivation more generally.

If teacher effectiveness is defined as 'achieving the goals which they set for themselves or which they have set for them by others' (Anderson, 2004:22) then this study offers three very different pictures of teacher effectiveness. When measured against their own individually valued goals, most are working effectively. The teachers are working less effectively when measured against the teacher-generated professional capabilities and even less so when measured against the official professional capabilities.

The effectiveness of teachers in Sub-Saharan Africa, or in other low income regions, however, is rarely measured against the goals teachers set for themselves. It tends to be measured against pupil achievement (Bruns, 2011) or against a nationally or researcher-defined list of effectiveness or competence criteria (Onderi and Croll, 2009). Anderson's

(2004) model of teacher effectiveness does not distinguish between teacher-determined and officially-determined goals (the implication is the latter). Few studies explore how teachers are able to achieve the goals they set for themselves or explore the differences between the goals set by governments and by teachers. By exploring the capability of teachers to achieve the goals they set for themselves and those set by governments, the analysis has revealed one of the most significant findings of this study which is that teachers may think they are working more effectively than governments do.

Tikly and Barrett (2011) claim that the school-effectiveness frameworks presented in the literature are often useful when applied to a school that is already basically functioning (that is, staff and students are regularly present and have reasonable levels of physical, emotional and mental well-being and where there is a certain level of infrastructure). However, in schools where these conditions are not met these frameworks do 'not have the flexibility to radically re-imagine the form that schooling can take' (p.4). This study has shown that a similar comparison can be made between the general teacher-effectiveness model, which is based on teacher competences and, as shown above, where there is an expectation that the teacher is working in an environment conducive to the fulfilment of these competences. Existing teacher effectiveness models do not have the flexibility to imagine the varied circumstances that teachers in Sub-Saharan Africa actually work in, particularly in rural schools. Through the the capability approach this study has provided a way of imagining these alternative circumstances.

The findings of this study also offer insights into how governments need to reconsider existing definitions and understandings of teacher motivation in order to address the issue. Both the official documents and the literature present an understanding of de-motivation

that begins with the choice of teaching as a last resort and becomes increasingly embedded through negative experiences of the profession:

'...disinclination for teacher education programmes translates into disinclination for teaching as a career and more profoundly into disinclination for teaching as a set of programmed activities geared towards transformational change in the learner... it is in short a great risk (if not the greatest risk) to the realisation of the educational goals of a nation.' (Obanya, 2010:36)

Teaching was a last resort for all seven teachers – yet they all felt they were motivated in their work. While the literature and official documents present teacher motivation as a general state, these teachers felt motivated to pursue different things at different times. These values and motivations relate to how they entered the profession and why and also the career path they imagine for themselves in the future. The teachers' values were also influenced by role-models, particularly those they worked with in the early stages of their careers.

The data in chapter 4 also implies that de-motivation represents a choice by teachers to work ineffectively. The findings of this study contest this in several ways.

First, chapter 6 showed that a lack of agency is a much bigger factor in why teachers do not pursue official functionings – it is because they cannot, not because they choose not to.

Secondly, the link between motivation and teachers' work is not as simple as much of the existing literature implies. All of the focus teachers articulated – and displayed – motivation



in and commitment to all or some aspects of their work; the list of teacher-generated functionings, for example was comparable in length and diversity to the list of official functionings. However while the literature and official perspectives present teacher motivation as a uniform and standardised state, and a singular, one-dimensional goal - teachers are either motivated or de-motivated - this study shows that it is more complex. Primarily the existing literature tends not to explore the goals that teachers are motivated to achieve; it does not consider that teachers who are (or claim to be) highly motivated might be motivated to pursue goals and values that are different from the goals and values held by officials. Agnes, for example, considers herself to be a highly motivated teacher, yet the goals she is motivated to pursue are both different from and less extensive than the goals determined for teachers officially. Ruth considers herself to be motivated in her work, but whether you analyse her agency and achievement against the official or teacher-generated capabilities, she is more motivated by some valued goals than others and prioritises these at the expense of other functionings. Nomfundo claims to be highly motivated yet there are areas of her work (for example garnering extra support for pupils with special needs) that she feels so unable to pursue that she no longer prioritises them as values. The literature and official documents imply that motivation is a simple process linking uniformly valued functionings and achievement of these functionings. This study suggests that it is more complex and that motivation is further factor that impacts on the circularity of teachers' professional capabilities.

Thirdly the areas of teachers' work in which the education officials cited evidence of low motivation involve aspects of work that most of the teachers in this study aren't aware are expected of them. The education officials, for example, felt that teachers were de-motivated because they weren't staying behind after school to do extra work. Most of the

teachers in this study felt that their work was bounded by the hours in the school day and that they were not expected to be at school outside these hours.

Fourthly, the official documents imply that teachers are not motivated because they do not see themselves as nation-builders. The teachers in this study see themselves as pupil-, school- or community-builders and their values and motivation are focussed on these more local goals. The data showed that most of the teachers in this study understood that teaching was a low status profession in their countries, but felt that in the communities where they worked they held a considerable level of status:

‘If you read the newspapers you will not feel respected, but if you look around you in your school, you see the relationships you have with people and how they treat you, then you know in your heart that you are loved and respected and that you are ok.’ (Habibah)

This is at odds with Watt (2001) who found that teachers tended to ‘function as extension agents of the government at village level [and] usually feel far more upwardly accountable to the public administration than downwardly accountable to the community from which they draw their students’ (p.24). UNESCO too (2007a) claim that teachers, because they are employed by the government, ‘can see themselves as accountable only to the education department, rather than to parents, students and local bodies’ and this can lead to a ‘confusion of loyalty and responsibility’ (p.33). Rather, the teachers in this study primarily saw themselves as ambassadors of the community rather than the government. Even the values and motivation of the teachers who did not have a close personal relationship with the community were more aligned with local needs (or their perception of these) rather than that of the government: confusion over loyalty arose instead because

more of the teachers were unable to pursue the official capability of loyalty to the national constitution. The teachers appear to be motivated to pursue local and personal, rather than national goals.

A second assumption in the literature is that an increase in pay leads to an increase in teacher motivation, particularly when salary increases are linked to performance. UNESCO (2009) consider pay scales and levels of teacher motivation across a range of countries and conclude that there is little evidence that performance-related pay produces positive results 'and some evidence that it has perverse effects' (like corruption) (p.13). Studies from Brazil on the other hand have shown how performance-related pay can have positive impacts on teachers' motivation (UNESCO, 2010). This study suggests that performance-related pay is unlikely to have an impact on teacher motivation if motivation continues to be considered as the impetus to pursue officially valued functionings. Because teachers are often unaware of these valued functionings a shared idea of 'good performance' would be necessary before such approaches could be effectively implemented.

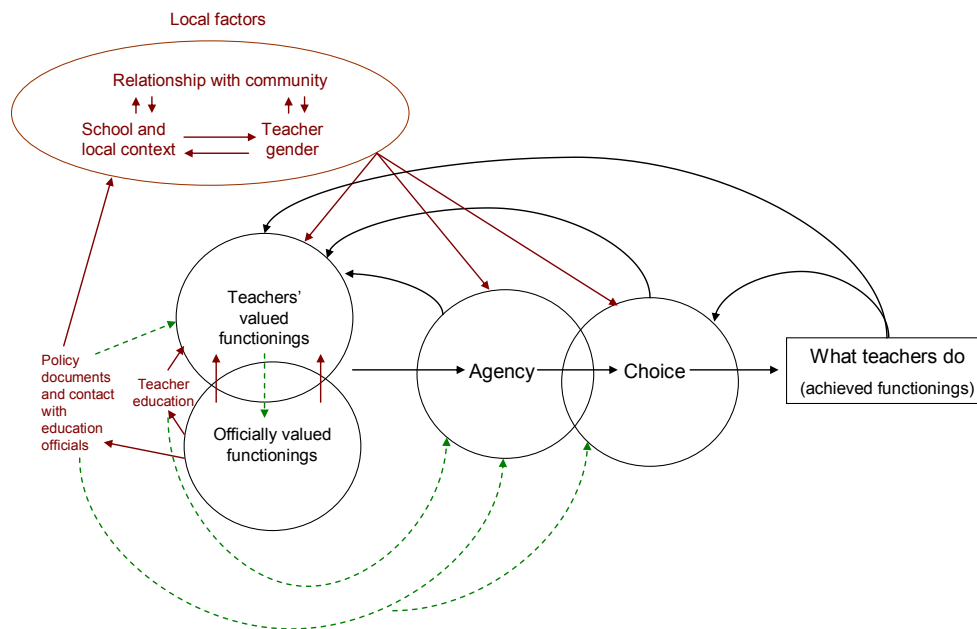
This study has found that it is more helpful to understand the areas in which teachers cut corners in their work. The outcome of these acts of cutting corners is the same as the outcomes of the assumptions of the de-motivation literature, i.e. teachers not doing what they know is expected of them. However, while the motivation literature implies that when teachers are de-motivated they cut corners in all that they do, this study has suggested that this is not the case. The teachers cut corners in specific aspects of their job when the local or school culture permits it (as in the Nigerian school where it is expected that mothers will be late for school and occasionally leave early), and where supervision is

lacking like in the Ghanaian school where teachers skip lessons partly because they think there aren't enough pupils to teach but mostly because they can and no one will notice.

Finally chapter 2 showed how the predominant focus in teacher motivation literature is what de-motivates teachers. This study suggests that teacher motivation and de-motivation are not necessarily two sides of the same coin. The literature, for example suggests that teachers are de-motivated by a lack of contact with education officials. Chapter 5 showed instead that this affects the teachers in this study in one of two ways, either they feel more confident pursuing the goals that they individually value, knowing they can do so uninterrupted, or they focus their motivation towards pursuing a narrower range of values that they know they can achieve. Neither of these responses aligns with the definition of teacher de-motivation implied by the literature. In fact, for some of the teachers this lack of contact increased their motivation to pursue other objectives (that, more often than not, are aimed at enhancing pupil learning and well-being). There is an assumption in both the literature and the official documents that removing or mitigating negative aspects of rural teaching will motivate teachers to work, and work effectively in rural schools. By exploring the relationship between valued goals and teachers' pursuit of these, this study has provided a way of seeing how the relationship between what teachers do and why – their motivation – can often be inspired by rather than weakened by the challenges of rural teaching.

### 8.3 Bringing the model of teachers' professional capability to life

This section considers the model of teachers' professional capabilities presented in chapter 7 in relation to the suggestions for policy highlighted above. The model has been expanded to take the teachers' settings and policy contexts into account.



**Figure 8.1 Expanded model of teachers' professional capability**

The expanded model shows how the empirical findings of this study map onto the theoretically developed model and shows both a real and an ideal scenario. The black arrows, as in section 7.5, depict the sometimes cyclical process of how teachers arrive at a set of achieved functionings. The brown arrows depict actual lines of influence, the dotted green arrows depict further, and ideal, lines of influence. Section 8.2 showed, for example, that teacher education influenced teachers' valued functionings – this is represented by a solid brown arrow. It also showed, however, how teacher education influenced teachers' valued functionings in the direction of official functionings, but often didn't impact on their agency to pursue these functionings. The notion of adaptive agency, introduced in this

study, is represented by a dotted green arrow – because from the perspectives of governments developing teachers’ agency as well as their values in the direction of officially valued functionings, would ideally be the case. There are dotted arrows between the presence of policy documents and officials, and teachers’ valued functionings and agency too. This represents the suggestion in section 8.2 that without sufficient support, new policies and education officials have a limited impact on what teachers value or what they feel able to pursue and do little to challenge teachers’ perceptions of their personal levels of effectiveness.

The diagram also shows how the study found that the direction of influence in terms of valued functionings is mostly one directional, from official to teachers’. The dotted green arrow pointing in the opposite direction represents the social justice-inspired suggestion that what is valued in teachers’ work could be more democratically agreed upon and represent both nationally and locally valued ideals in education.

Sen argues that policies for development should be about eliminating or decreasing obstacles that ‘prevent people from achieving a quality of life they have reason to value’ (Sen 1993). This model does not propose a ‘specific formula for policy decisions’ in the educational governance of teachers (Sen, 2009:232), rather it shows how empirical applications of the capability approach can enable a handle on different policy perspectives. It demonstrates how policies for teachers should be about eliminating or decreasing obstacles that prevent them from achieving professional capabilities that more equally represent ideas about teaching that both they, and the governments they work for, have reason to value.

## **8.4 Conclusions and directions for future research**

To conclude the thesis this section offers some final thoughts on the research and suggests how the study points to further avenues for debate and exploration.

The study has shown how the capability approach, which (in education studies) has been predominantly used to understand the capabilities of learners and students, can provide a frame of reference for understanding the professional lives of teachers. It has examined the professional lives of female teachers in rural communities in Sub-Saharan Africa – an important dimension of the global challenge to achieve EFA. But rural education issues (and the EFA agenda) are not limited to Sub-Saharan Africa, or to low-income countries. Cuervo (2012) draws on a decade of studies to show how rural schools in Australia are disadvantaged in relation to their metropolitan counterparts and struggle to recruit and retain rural teachers. Skelton (2004) focuses on a rural district in Alaska where teacher turnover is 40% per year and the average career span of teachers is 2 years. Globally, it appears, there is a mirroring of the negative rhetoric around conditions of rurality that was highlighted in this study. The use of the capability approach could provide insights into the complex ways in which teachers' lives are situated in these other rural environments too. Also, as in this study, the capability approach could provide grounds for re-thinking policy orientations to teachers working in such contexts that aren't rooted in a re-distributional agenda that aims to bring 'normality' to the 'deviant' rural school (Cuervo, 2012:89), but that reflect a more democratic recognition of the needs of different communities.

In relation to the notion of democracy, by using the capability approach as a framework for re-thinking policy orientations around teachers, this study has raised questions around the articulated need to recognise and reflect the needs of different groups (Barrett and Tikly,

2010): a prominent aspect of the capabilities, EFA and social justice literature. In particular this study has questioned the legitimacy of different positions within the democratic approach to capability selection and highlighted conflicts between the valued functionings and capabilities of governments and teachers. Resolving such conflicts in capability selection is something that has been largely ignored in both empirical and theoretical writing about the capability approach and – in terms of education studies and more generally – would provide an interesting avenue for further work.

In addition, this study highlighted the cyclical nature of teachers' values, agency and achieved functionings and proposed an alternative way of thinking about adaptive preferences that moves away from the negative discourse in which the concept is usually articulated. Again, in terms of teachers' work, but also more generally, this points towards an avenue for research into the selection of capabilities that recognises the fluidity and non-static nature of what is valued by different groups at different times and how agency may also adapt in relation to (and re-inform) these adapted preferences.

From an empirical perspective this study has suggested ways in which teachers' gender, values, agency and professional lives intersect, but also raised further questions about the role that women teachers play, and can play in rural communities. Further research into the gendered nature of teachers' professional capabilities and the impact this has on the educational experiences of rural pupils could provide a rich and valuable contribution to discussions around the need to increase the number of women teachers in rural schools.

The literature in chapter 2 implied that rural teaching environments present overwhelming challenges for teachers that ensure they largely 'exist in a 'climate of frustration... and despondency' (VSO, 2002:24). This thesis has tried to present an alternative perspective



on rural teaching environments in Sub-Saharan Africa, and an alternative perspective on how teachers experience these environments. It has not questioned the existence of these overwhelming challenges; rather it has suggested how they can shape teachers' professional capabilities and impact on how effective they are – and on how effective they perceive themselves to be - in the classroom.

The Ghanaian education official interviewed for this study admitted that, 'educational governance needs to look more often in the direction of rural schools' (EOG1/2009). Teachers, especially in resource-constrained environments, play a crucial role in the educational process, in the pursuit of the EFA targets (and beyond), and in the pursuit of social justice for children who need it more than any other children in the world. Looking more often in the direction of teachers in these environments, and investing in and better understanding the professional lives that they create and experience, appears to be a key element in the pursuit of these goals. To quote Sabeera, teachers should be thought of more often as the 'first link in the chain'. Not, to quote Ruth, 'the bottom of the pile'.

# Appendices

## Appendix 1 List of official documents analysed

Document	Date	Title	Author / Document Type	Intended Audience
<b>Ghana</b>				
DocG1	2002	Meeting the Challenges of Education in the Twenty-First Century	30-member committee set up by the President of Ghana to review the educational system with a view to making it responsive to current challenges	Education stakeholders
DocG2	2004	The Development of Education, National Report of Ghana	Ghana Ministry of Education	Education stakeholders
DocG3	2003	Education strategic plan 2003-2015: Vol 1 – policies, targets and strategies	Ghana Ministry of Education	Education stakeholders
DocG4	2008	Teachers' code of conduct: Rules of professional conduct for teachers in Ghana	USAID (with Ghanaian education stakeholders and organisations)	Ministry of Education (then) teachers and other education practitioners
DocG5	2011	Report on Education in Ghana	World Bank	Policy makers, development partners, civil society representatives
DocG6	2002	National Action Plan to EFA for Ghana	Government of Ghana	Education stakeholders
DocG7	2008	Preliminary Education Sector Report	Ghana Ministry of Education	Stakeholders in education (especially authors of the Education Sector Performance Report)
DocG8	2004	Development of Education: National Report of Ghana	Basic Education Division, Ghana Education Service (GES)	Audience of the 47 <sup>th</sup> Session of the International Conference on Education (ICE) Geneva
DocG9	2010	Education Sector Performance Report	Ghana Ministry of Education	Education stakeholders
<b>Nigeria</b>				
DocN1	2008	Professional Standards for Nigerian Teachers	Teacher Quality Task Team, Federal Ministry of Education Teachers	Education stakeholders and practitioners / teachers
DocN2	2004	National Policy on Education – 4 <sup>th</sup> edition	Government of Nigeria, Federal Ministry of Education	Education stakeholders
DocN3	2006	Vision 2020: The role of the Nigerian Education	Government of Nigeria, Federal	Education stakeholders

		Sector	Ministry of Education	
DocN4	2006	Education Sector Situation Analysis (Draft 4)	Government of Nigeria, Federal Ministry of Education	Education stakeholders
DocN5	2006	National Framework for Education	Government of Nigeria, Federal Ministry of Education	Education stakeholders
DocN6	2002	Teacher Education in Nigeria: Past, present and future	Ahmed Modibbo Mohammed & Abdurrahman Umar	Governments, policy makers, practitioners and academics (and all stakeholders in education sector)
DocN7	2008	The Development of Education, National Report of Nigeria	Federal Ministry of Education	48 <sup>th</sup> Session of the International Conference on Education
DocN8	2008	Nigeria Country Case Study: EFA by 2015, will we make it?	David Theobald, Abdurrahman Umar, Sarah Ochekepe, Kayode Sanni	EFA Global Monitoring Report authors
DocN9	2005	Review of Pre-Service Teacher Education Curricula in Nigeria	Tee-Kay Consultancy services (funded and chaired by Nigeria's Universal Basic Education Commission, National Commission for Colleges of Education, National Teachers' Institute, Teachers' Registration Council and World Bank)	Ministry of Education, education policy makers, education stakeholders
DocN10	2007	Federal Ministry of Education 10 Year Strategic Plan	Federal Ministry of Education	Education stakeholders
DocN11	2007	Education Reform Act	Federal Ministry of Education	Education stakeholders (to be read alongside 10 year strategic plan and Vision 2020)
DocN12	2003	Education Sector Status Report	Federal Ministry of Education	Education stakeholders
DocN13	2009	Roadmap for the Nigerian Education Sector	Dr. Sam O. Egwu (Minister of Education)	Education stakeholders but especially practitioners
<b>Kenya</b>				
DocK1	2010	Quality Index: Guideline for Quality Assurance and Standards Assessment of Schools in Kenya	Directorate of Quality Assurance and Standards, Kenyan Ministry of Education	Education supervisors and teachers
DocK2	2004	Education policy report	Kenyan Ministry of	Education

			Education, Science and Technology	stakeholders and practitioners
DocK3	2005	Code of Regulations for Teachers	Teachers Service Commission	Teachers and education practitioners
DocK4	2005	Kenya Education Sector Support Programme 2005-2010	Kenyan Ministry of Education, Science and Technology	Stakeholders and service providers in education
DocK5	2004	Sessional Paper: Meeting the Challenges of Education, Training and Research in Kenya in the 21 <sup>st</sup> Century	Kenyan Ministry of Education, Science and Technology	Stakeholders and service providers in education
DocK6	2001	The quality of primary education in Kenya	UNESCO	Policy makers and other stakeholders
<b>South Africa</b>				
DocSA1	2010	Draft Action Plan to 2014	Department of Basic Education, Republic of South Africa	The general public and 'other interested parties'.
DocSA2	2003	Policy handbook for educators	The Education Labour Relations Council	Teachers
DocSA3	2002	National curriculum statement	Department of Education	All South Africans especially teachers and other education stakeholders
DocSA4	2004	National education information policy	Department of Education	Practitioners and stakeholders of education
DocSA5	2010	Physical Teaching Environment	Department of Basic Education	Practitioners and stakeholders of education
DocSA6	2003	Plan of Action: Improving access to Free and Quality Education for All	South African Government	Education stakeholders
SocSA7	2008	Improvements in conditions of service for teachers	South African Government	Teachers
DocSA8	1999	HIV/AIDS Education policy	South African Government	Teachers
DocSA9	2005	Rights and responsibilities of parents, learners and public schools	Department of Education/ World Bank	General public and practitioners.
DocSA10	2006	National Policy Framework for Teacher Education and Development in South Africa: more teachers, better teachers	Department of Education	Teachers, teacher educators and stakeholders in education
DocSA12	2000	Explanatory notes to the Norms and Standards for Educators	Department of Education	Teachers and teacher education institutions
DocSA13	2000	Norms and Standards	Department of	Teachers and teacher

		for Educators	Education, Policy Statement	education institutions
DocSA14	2010	Statement of Progress on the Review of the National Curriculum Statement: Basic Education	Minister of Basic Education (Angie Motshekga)	General public
<b>Sudan</b>				
DocSU1	2004	National Report on Education	Federal Ministry of Education, General Directorate of Educational Planning	Practitioners and stakeholders of education
DocSU2	1999	Sudan report to UNESCO	Director of Sudan Educational Assessment Department	EFA Forum
DocSU3	2007	The Five Year Plan (2007-2011)	National Council for Strategic Planning	Education stakeholders and international community
DocSU5	2004	Sudan MDG Unified Interim Report	Sudanese Government and Southern Sudan Centre of Statistics and Evaluation (with UN agencies, World Bank and partners)	Millennium Development Goals Committee and education stakeholders
DocSU6	2010	MDG Progress Report	Republic of Sudan Ministry of Welfare and Social Security	General public, education stakeholders
DocSU7	2004	Republic of Sudan: Basic Education Sub-Sector Study: Analysis of curriculum and suggestions for National Curriculum Framework	UNESCO consultancy team	Sudanese Ministry of Education
DocSU8	2002	Education Policy for the New Sudan	Ministry of Education	Education stakeholders and teachers
DocSU9	2007	Draft 5-Year Strategic Plan for Education 2007-2011	Federal Ministry of General Education	Education stakeholders
DocSU10	2001	The Development of Education: The National Report of the Republic of Sudan	Federal Ministry of Education / General Directorate for Educational Planning	Education stakeholders

## Appendix 2 List of education officials interviewed

<b>Interview</b>	<b>Position</b>	<b>Date of interview</b>	<b>Location of interview</b>
<b>Ghana</b>			
EOG1	Director General of the Ghana Education Service (GES)	06/08/2009	GES compound, Accra
<b>Nigeria</b>			
EON1	Local Government Education Secretary	15/03/2007	Local Government Office, Kaduna state
EON2a	Education Supervisor	19/03/2007	Gadanan School
EON2b	Senior Education Officer (promoted since 2007 interview)	16/02/2011	Gadanan School
<b>Kenya</b>			
EOK1	Professor of Education and Ministerial Advisor	25/03/2009	Hotel lobby, Nakuru
<b>South Africa</b>			
EOA1	Inspector of Schools, District Education Office	26/08/2010	District Education Office
<b>Sudan</b>			
EOSU1	Professor of Teacher Education and Government Advisor	05/02/2009	Ministry of Education, Khartoum
EOSU2	Secretary General of the Sudanese National Commission for Education (Ministry of Education)	12/02/2009	Ministry of Education, Khartoum
EOSU3	Curriculum developer, National Centre for Curriculum and Education Research (NCCER)	04/02/2009	NCCER, Bakter Ruda
EOSU4	Director General of the National Curriculum Centre for Educational Research (NCCER)	12/02/2009	NCCER, Bakter Ruda

## Appendix 3 Participating schools

Country	School	Location	Distance from urban centre	No. pupils	No. teachers	Features
<b>Ghana</b>	Nkyen	Village	15km	282	6	Single strip of classrooms along main road, separated from village by main road (lots of lorries). Pupils have to cross road to reach school. Large playing field but no clear boundary to site, no security. No water or electricity, no toilet, one lockable cupboard. Sufficient desks/chairs but worn blackboards and potholed floors.
<b>Nigeria</b>	Gadanan	Village	8km	670	50	School in high-walled compound with lockable gate. Classrooms built around a sand playground. Some play equipment (some vandalised). One un-lockable toilet (hole in floor), no water or electricity. Too many teachers but not enough classrooms (double-shift system), insufficient desks/chairs for pupils and teachers. Lockable office with lockable cupboard. Worn blackboards and potholed floors.
<b>Kenya</b>	Kijani	Countryside	20km	550	11	Large campus on edge of mountain, surrounded by tea plantations. Large playing field. Three toilets (holes in floor). Not enough classrooms, not enough desks/chairs. Worn blackboards and potholed floors. Large staffroom (lockable) and staff kitchen with fire pit. One water tap, no electricity.
<b>South Africa</b>	Isibane	Township	5km	1007	32	Large site with modern buildings. High fence and lockable gate with security guard. All classrooms lockable and with electricity. Classrooms (especially in the lower years) well-resourced with paper, stationery and colourful wall-displays. Computer room (used to be staff room) with 20 computers, 5 of which work. Medical room with basic first aid equipment. Four toilets (flushable) and separate staff toilet. Kitchen and free school meals. Vegetable garden.
<b>Sudan</b>	bab alnaher	Village	30km	324	7	Attractive, walled, lockable compound, classrooms built around central courtyard with trees for shade. Electricity in office but not in classrooms. One toilet (hole in floor) shared between pupils and teachers' hostel (later replaced by a new toilet block with running water).



## Appendix 4 Accommodation arrangements during fieldwork

Country	Name	Accommodation	Bathroom	Water supply	Electricity supply	Transport to school	Journey time (min)	Similarity with focus teacher	Similarity with local norm
<b>Ghana</b>	Ruth	Own room in teachers' hostel	Shared	No	Limited	Foot	< 5	High	High
	Alison	Own room, rented	Own	No	Limited	Foot	<5		
<b>Kenya</b>	Cecilia	Rented room in village between Nakuru and Kijani	Own	Shared with neighbours	Limited	Matatu	> 20	Low-medium	Low-medium
	Alison	Cheap hotel on outskirts of Nakuru	Own	Yes	Occasional (limited in evenings)	Matatu	> 40		
<b>Nigeria</b>	Habibah	Large family house	Own (family)	Yes but frequent cuts	Yes	Foot	10	High	Low-medium
	Alison	Rented room on university campus	Own	Yes but frequent cuts	Yes	Car	15		
<b>South Africa</b>	Mandisa	Own house in town	Own (family)	Yes	Yes	Car	15	High	High
	Alison	Rented room in township	Shared with family	Yes	Yes	Shared taxi	15		
<b>Sudan</b>	Sabeera	Large family house	Own	Yes	Yes	Foot	5	Low	High
	Alison	Room in teachers' hostel (shared with 5 other teachers)	No (used school toilet shared with 300 others)	Water pipe in compound	Very limited	Foot	1		

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