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Country Case Study Republic of the Gambia

**Using the Monitoring of Learning Achievement (MLA)
Study to Investigate Quality Factors in Private Schools**

*Republic of the Gambia
Department of State for Education*

**Working Document
DRAFT**

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Acronyms and abbreviations

EFA	Education For All
MLA	Monitoring of Learning Achievement
GCE	General Certificate of Education
PTA	Parent Teacher Association
DOSE	Department Of State for Education
GER	Gross Enrolment Rate
WAEC	West African Examination Council
SQAD	Standards and Quality Assurance Directorate
CA	Continuous Assessment
GABECE	Gambia Basic Education Certificate Examination
WASSCE	West African Senior Secondary Certificate Examination
PTC	Primary Teachers Certificate
HTC	Higher Teachers Certificate
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
SSSCE	Senior Secondary School Certificate Examination
ADEA	Association for the Development of Education in Africa
ERNWACA	Educational Research Network for West and Central Africa
PER	Public Expenditure Review
CCM	Co-ordinating Committee Meeting
NAT	National Assessment Test

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1.1. Introduction

1. As part of the Education For All (EFA) 2000 Assessment, The Gambia conducted a Monitoring of Learning Achievement (MLA) study to assess children's learning achievement and the conditions that may influence learning. It focused on investigating learning achievements in the core subjects of a sample of Grades 4 pupils in Gambian Lower Basic Schools with the aim of establishing pupils mastery levels based on bench marks designed from the curriculum.

2. The methodology included using stratified and random sampling procedures that selected a sample of 2394 pupils from 64 schools (of which 2 were private) 86 grade 4 teachers (of which 2 were from private schools) and 2401 parents. Learning Achievement Targets for Grade 4 in the core subject areas were designed and the same test instrument administered to all schools. Questionnaires were administered to all the school head teachers, the class teachers, the parents of pupils in the survey and the pupils themselves with the aim of determining the factors that may influence pupils learning achievement. The schools locations were stratified according to rural, rural-urban and urban and the school type into Private, Mission and Government.

3. The findings of the MLA study were alarming. The overwhelming majority of pupils did not achieve mastery level of 70%. Private schools performed better than the Mission and Government schools. The mean Scores were 84% for private, 46% for Mission and 36% for Government. Urban pupils outperformed the rural pupils in all the achievement tests. Boys also outperformed girls in almost all the tests.

4. Considering the gains made by the sector in increasing access to basic education over the past five years, the need to focus on quality cannot be over-emphasised. Furthermore, because of the data limitation in the MLA (2000) study with regard to private schools, this study includes additional ones and 25 additional teachers from the private schools. It further investigates the conditions of teaching and learning at both school and classroom levels as well as home factors of students in the private schools used in the MLA study. The aim is to determine those conditions and processes that may contribute to the poor performance in Government and Mission schools and the high performance in the Private schools. The methodology used includes Quantitative reanalysis of the MLA Data by School type, and a Qualitative study of the private schools.

5. In conducting the study, the literature reviewed focused basically on research on School Effectiveness factors, and School Improvement factors. It also touched on the advantages of blending the qualitative and quantitative approaches.

1.2. Findings

6. The fundamental question which this study seeks to answer is why Private schools performed better than Government and Mission schools during the MLA survey and similar national assessments. The findings suggest that the following lend themselves better to explain the disparity in performance:

- School management style
- availability of basic teaching and learning resources

- Quality of monitoring and supervision
- Professional support provided for teachers

7. The following provides a synopsis of the main findings of the study:

▪ **Availability of teaching & learning materials**

- From the MLA study, it could be observed that nationally, 33.85% of schools do not have adequate chalk supply. All such schools are either government or mission schools. Private schools do not have problems with chalk supply. However, the situation with regard to blackboards is much better in that only about 6% of government schools and 11% of mission schools do not have adequate blackboards.
- The MLA (2000) study also revealed that the government schools are the least endowed with teaching syllabi, pupils' books, teachers' guides and dictionaries. Whereas 89% of private schools have adequate syllabus only 32% of government and 13% of mission schools have adequate syllabus. A similar trend can be observed when pupil's textbooks are considered. 67% of private schools have adequate pupil's textbooks, while 56% of mission and only 40% of government schools have adequate pupil's textbooks.
- In the private schools, the availability of learning materials was evident and they assisted the learning process. In the classes observed the pupils were in possession of additional materials apart from the basic textbooks and notebooks. The school recommended the course books and supplementary readers. There were also resources provided by their parents in the form of rulers, mathematical set boxes, vocabulary books and a book exclusively for homework or for extra tuition.

▪ **Quality of Teaching & Learning**

- Of the 70.69% of parents with children in private schools who are provided two hours or more of extra teaching or coaching, 58.49% of them had a special teacher or used the services of the class teacher after school. However, 58.59% and 50.88% respectively of parents with children in government or mission schools provided two or more hours of coaching with only 26.46% and 36.15% of them utilising the services of class teachers after school or a special teacher.
- The teachers in the private schools visited prepare their teaching records, schemes. They teach with enthusiasm and confidence. The teachers within the same grade level prepared their lessons and schemes together, collaborating in thinking of ideas, resources and methodology.
- The lessons observed were all linked to the previous ones, which indicated continuity and progression in the teaching and learning process. The teachers made sure that the pupils, for most of the time, took care of their own learning and were fully engaged. The quiet and dormant ones among them were eventually drawn into the lesson.
- In ninety percent of the classes visited the methods employed by the teachers suited the ability and age range of the pupils. They worked in peer groups and engaged in writing, drawing, measuring and other forms of practical work. This flexibility is a process factor that determines the effectiveness of any lesson.

- Apart from the practice done by the pupils towards the end of the lessons, periodic tests were given to them and these were seen in their notebooks. The assessment records in all the classes visited indicated that frequent student assessment takes place and feedback given by the teachers. The pupils in all the classes were encouraged to do their corrections and were interested in their achievements.

▪ **School Management**

- From the MLA (2000) study, in government schools, less than half (43%) of the teacher's work is checked 2 to 3 times weekly, whereas in both mission and private schools, the regularity of checking teachers work is greater, 66% in both cases. Occasional checking of teachers' work happens in government schools only.
- The same study also reveals that there are more teachers in Government schools (23%) pursuing any training than those in both Private & Mission schools (10%) and private schools (18%). The same trend can be observed when one considers teachers pursuing further qualification in education
- The level of head teachers' assistance in the form of school-based workshops is very encouraging (government 83.72%, 66.67% and private 88.89%). However, the high frequency of school based workshops in government schools has not produced the expected corresponding result in student performance.

▪ **Head teachers' views**

8. Head teachers from private schools were interviewed to assess the management styles in the seven private schools with a view to finding out those school effectiveness factors present in these private schools to warrant such high achievement. Qualifications and experience, the quality of teaching and learning, monitoring, supervision and assessment, parental and community participation and support and, school choice were looked at. The following came out:

- With regard to resources and incentives, head teacher salaries in private schools are a little better even though the difference is not significant. However, the incentives such as interest free loan schemes make a difference. Private schools have more resources than both the government and mission schools due to the fact that the proprietors order the books and parents are willing to purchase them.
- The choice of school of the respondents was largely determined by the fact that they gain more satisfaction in teaching in private schools. There are less managerial problems in terms of resources, teachers and pupils in general.
- Lesson preparation is given prominent attention in private schools.
- Regarding Time on Task, school hours are the same in these schools as in government schools.
- In the private schools, pupils are given individual attention and the progress of the bright ones is not delayed.
- On school supervision and management, a feature that came out clearly in the study is that there is constant monitoring in the private schools. Heads are very vigilant and teachers are aware of this and do not take any chance to compromise quality. This is absent in government schools as stated by one of the heads.

- In government and mission schools the majority of head teachers have secondary fourth (50%) and General Certificate of Education ‘O’ level (47%) as the highest academic qualification, those in the private schools have GCE ‘O’ levels and not a single head in this category has secondary four as the highest qualification.
- **Teachers’ views**
 - Some teachers from the private schools indicated that senior teachers observed lessons and gave support, encouragement and suggestions on teaching methodologies and technique.
 - To the teachers, teaching and learning are the most important activities in the school. To maximise actual ‘time on task’, time was not wasted unnecessarily. Thus, both teachers and pupils went to school on time.
 - The administrative staff monitored compliance, and did not tolerate lateness. Teachers who went to school late had a red line drawn against their names, and permission must be sought before any teacher could leave the school premises during hours of work.
- **Pupils’ views**
 - The majority of pupils interviewed in the private schools stated that they like their school because both teachers and pupils are hard working; their teachers teach them well and the pupils perform well in selective examinations; they work on their own, have lessons with ‘floating’ teachers or are supervised by a neighbour class teacher.
 - Pupils expressed satisfaction at the resources provided by the school and their parents.
 - On the issue of library, all the pupils indicated the absence of a library and expressed their wish to have one in their school.
- **Parents’ Views**
 - The study reveals that parents’ choice of a private school is influence by a host of factors such as:
 - Good passes in National exam results
 - Proximity to house
 - Lack of a double shift system
 - Teacher status, experience and commitment
 - Positive teacher attitude regarding teaching and learning
 - School concern for appropriate pupil behaviour
 - About 50% of the parents interviewed believe that there are better teachers in private schools and as a result, children perform better in private schools than in public schools. About 68% of parents’ choice is influenced by the fact that there is no double-shift and according to them no over loading of teachers.

1.3. Recommendations

- Education authorities (DOSE) should ensure that the school effectiveness factors identified in Private schools should be adopted by the other types of schools.
- Taking into consideration that the head teacher's managerial skills makes a difference in the performance of a school, it is recommended that head teachers be trained on management before assuming duties, and those in managerial positions without any training be subjected to one.
- The study has proven that the availability of resources aids school improvement. It is recommended that Government schools be provided with enough teaching and learning materials, especially textbooks and supplementary books. The DOSE should ensure this by increasing the budgetary allocation for public schools.
- It is important that teachers in Government schools sign a working contract with the head teacher and the head teacher be given the mandate to have the powers to recommend the dismissal of any teacher not performing as required. This will make teachers in government schools more committed to their work.
- The issue of monitoring and supervision should be taken seriously in government schools. This has been stated in many inspection reports and inspectors have even issued forms to schools
- The issue of school parent link should be adequately addressed. Sensitisation programmes should be embarked on to bridge the gap.
- Teachers constitute a significant variable in the learning process and in effectiveness of schools too. Quality teaching therefore depends on the quality of teachers in terms of training, commitment, attitude, sincerity, and academic standing. The recruitment process, teacher education, promotion and professional development should not be taken for granted in public schools but addressed by policy makers.
- Inputs for external monitoring and supervision may not be as effective as internal efficiency and quality assurance measures instituted within each school. Incentives, job satisfaction and improved working conditions can increase teacher motivation and correspondingly increase output and improve performance.
- School policies should be made flexible to allow Heads to experiment and implement their educational beliefs and ideas. School leaders must be educators by orientation. Education that can provide guidance, strong leadership and maintain a clear sense of direction amid unity of purpose for all staff.
- Communities and parents need to be brought closer to the schools to provide support, supplement school efforts and help to hold teachers accountable.
- Basic requirements that make schools safe, attractive, functional and fascinating should be provided, and pupils encouraged to learn with or without teacher support.
- School Heads should be assisted to identify the factors and characteristics associated with effective schools and to ultimately assess themselves

systemically over time for improvement purposes. In this regard, assessment should provide information on how effective the schools are and ratings made along such lines.

- Helping the child learn at home is not rated high in the priority of parents. After establishing the desired link with the PTA, schools should embark on working with the PTA to establish this link.
- The goals and objective(s) of the course work and single lessons set the tone for the teaching and learning process. Therefore, the preparation of lessons before teaching should be emphasised and seen to be very important.
- Child centred and democratic approaches in learning should be encouraged. The pupils perform, understand and apply what they have learnt better, when they take charge of their own learning. Teaching includes discussions, group work, project work etc.
- The 880 hours pupil contact time which is recommended, but which is yet to be achieved, should be closely looked into. The afternoon classes in Government schools should be thoroughly supervised by the school administration to ensure value for money. DOSE should endeavour to engage a separate cohort of teachers in the afternoon.
- Self-discipline and orderliness should be emphasised. The culture and ethos of our education institutions should be characterised and shaped by a policy addressing school discipline and codes of conduct.
- The upward mobility of teachers in terms of promotion should take cognisance of their ability to develop self-discipline in the pupils.
- They should also be able to put in place a school discipline policy and measures to create an orderly learning environment, which the learners themselves cherish and have a sense of ownership of. There should also be recognition of work well done and, on the other hand, sanctions for defiance.

2. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

9. The main thrust of The Gambia's Education policy 1988 to 2003 revolves around 'Access, Quality and Relevance'. Since 1988, however, when the Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) was 50%, the Government of The Gambia has been gravely concerned about the number of children that are unable to gain access to the formal school system. Poor quality delivery of education and a curriculum that was not wholly relevant and responsive to the needs and experiences of Gambians compounded the low enrolment rate.

10. The Department of State for Education, therefore, dedicated the best part of the policy period focusing on access, quality and relevance and recognised the need to invest in education to increase the existing level of education in order to boost the quality of education and increase the level of participation in the labour market. Thus, the development needs of the country, as contained in the national vision statement – Vision 2020 – among other things, call for creating a “well-educated, trained, skilled, healthy, self-reliant and enterprising population”.

11. At present, The Gambia is one of the few countries in Sub-Saharan Africa that can boast of a GER of 85% (2001) which, to a considerable degree, is due to the interventions and policies adopted since 1998. However, this high enrolment rate has an impact on the overall quality of educational service delivery, thus requiring the provision of quality basic education to be accorded a high priority.

12. Despite the gains made in attaining the central objectives of the policy, there are still major challenges posing as constraints in implementation. These include inadequate resources (human, capital and material), which are consequently affecting various attempts to curb dropout and repetition rates and increasing completion rates. This has impacted seriously on teacher morale and performance in the attainment of quality learning outcomes.

13. Since Jomtien (1990), the resolve to attain Education For All by 2015, has been further strengthened. The Education Policy 1988-2003 has, as one of its objectives, the provision of nine years of uninterrupted quality basic education for all Gambian children. The Gambia being one of the few countries envisaged to achieve Education for all by 2015, has been selected for the Fast Track Initiative with the objective of addressing the problem of quality basic education, gender equity, teacher efficiency, and the reduction of illiteracy rates.

14. The Department of State for Education (DOSE) has overall policy responsibility for the provision of the full range of educational services. The formal system consists of six years of lower basic, three years of upper basic and three years of senior secondary schooling followed by 3 years of continuing education at tertiary institutions or 4 years at the university level. The first nine years of education constitute the basic education cycle, which is mainly provided by government while the senior secondary, technical and vocational, and tertiary and university education are funded largely through the Grant-In Aid arrangement and the private sector.

15. Through the Education Master Plan (1997-2006), programmes have been drawn to meet the targets set for the attainment of the goals for the basic education cycle and these include:

- Provision of quality basic education
- Reduction of illiteracy rates by about 50%
- Attaining gender equity in primary and secondary enrolment by 2005
- Enhancement of the quality and efficiency of teachers
- Enhanced financing of education sector programmes

16. The issue of quality and relevance of teaching and learning, the curriculum and learning materials have been a concern for the sector, teachers and parents alike. Hence the curriculum at the level of basic education has been revised with emphasis on the strengthening of school-based assessment system and making it more relevant to the learning needs of children.

17. At the Upper Basic and Senior Secondary levels, the West African Examinations Council (WAEC), in collaboration with the Standards and Quality Assurance Directorate (SQAD) and the schools, are responsible for conducting a Continuous Assessment (CA) which accounts for 30% of The Gambia Basic Education Certificate Examinations (GABECE) and West African Senior Secondary Certificate Examinations (WASSCE).

18. In supporting the implementation of the above strategy, the pre-service training of teachers at the levels of Primary Teachers Certificate (PTC) and Higher Teachers Certificate (HTC) has been intensified. A new training strategy utilising a dual mode, (combination of distance learning and face-to-face on campus) was adopted in September 1999 thus increasing the duration of in-field training. The intake into the Teacher training at Gambia College both the PTC was doubled and HTC was increased fivefold. A well-structured in-service training model has also been developed using both school-based and cluster-based approaches.

19. Notwithstanding the gains registered in increasing access to basic education over the past five years, there is growing demand for the need to improve the learning achievements of children which were met by only 10% and 6.7% of a sample size of 25% of Grade 4 students in the areas of English and Mathematics respectively (The Gambia MLA Study 2000). Such alarmingly low achievement levels were worst in rural schools.

20. There is a critical need to focus more attention on quality education especially at the basic level. During the first half of the policy period, there were no targets set for learning outcomes and the only available measure of achievement was the success rate of individual schools and candidates at selective entrance examinations at the end of grades 6 and 9. Recently benchmarks have been drawn to clearly define learning outcomes at the lower basic for quality assessment while the annual National Assessment Test (NAT) using a sample size of 25% of pupils in grades 3 and 5 is now institutionalised to inform the system on pupils' performance at the lower basic level.

21. Based on the benchmarks, a study on Monitoring of Learning Achievement (MLA) was conducted in 2000, with the aim of assessing children's learning achievement and the conditions that may influence learning.

22. The MLA investigated the learning achievements in the core subjects of a sample of Grades 4 pupils in Gambian Lower Basic Schools with the aim of establishing pupils mastery levels based on bench marks designed from the curriculum. Monitoring of Learning Achievement (MLA) Research is anticipated to be one of the instruments to inform policy on appropriate measures to ensure quality. With the phasing out of the Primary School Leaving Examination (PSLCE), which was limited in a number of ways, as it was designed strictly for purposes of selection, the MLA emerged as an answer to the search for a more scientific and formative way of assessing children's learning achievements and the conditions that may influence learning.

23. The methodology included using stratified and random sampling procedures that selected a sample of 2 394 pupils from 64 schools (of which 2 were private) 86 grade 4 teachers (of which 2 were from private schools) and 2401 parents. Learning Achievement Targets for Grade 4 in the core subject areas were designed and the same test instrument administered to all schools. Questionnaires were administered to all the school head teachers, the class teachers, the parents of pupils in the survey and the pupils

themselves with the aim of determining the factors that may influence pupils learning achievement. The schools locations were stratified according to rural, rural-urban and urban and the school type was divided into Private Mission and Government.

24. The findings of the study were alarming. The overwhelming majority of pupils did not achieve mastery level of 70 %. Private schools performed better than the Mission and Government schools. The mean scores in English were 81.14 % for private, 46.34 % for Mission and 36.68 % for Government, whereas for Mathematics, the corresponding mean scores were 72.29 %, 44.31 % and 38.88 % respectively. Similar trends were established in Social & Environmental Studies and Science. Urban pupils also outperformed the rural pupils in all the achievement tests. Boys also outperformed girls in almost all the tests.

2.1. Methodology of the current study

25. Due to the limited data on the private schools in the MLA, this study includes seven additional private schools and 25 additional teachers from all the private schools. Using the original MLA 2000 data, together with the additional data from the fieldwork conducted, the study investigates quality factors in private schools aimed at serving as a follow up to the Monitoring of Learning Achievement Survey (MLA).

26. It further investigates the conditions of teaching and learning at both school and classroom levels as well as home factors of students in the private schools used in the MLA study. The aim is to determine those conditions and processes that may contribute to the poor performance in Government and Mission schools and the high performance in the Private schools.

27. The Methodology used in this study includes:

- *Quantitative reanalysis of the MLA Data by School type.* Reanalysis of the MLA data to determine the school conditions that may influence learning by school type, which was a gap in the MLA study. This research analyses, in-depth, the effectiveness factors present in the Private schools, based on family background and support, teacher experience and qualification, availability of teaching and learning materials, teaching and assessment methods and financial cost of attending a private school.
- *Qualitative study of Private schools.* The MLA 2000 study did not administer any of the School questionnaires or in depth interview to any private school that were in the survey. The follow-up study involved a series of interviews with school stakeholders focusing on the following school effectiveness factors:
 - School finance and the availability of resources,
 - school leadership,
 - monitoring and supervision,
 - culture of learning in the school,
 - teacher incentive,
 - student attitude,
 - teacher morale and training and
 - community links.

28. The study will come out with a detailed analysis of the factors in the private schools that foster higher learning achievement among all students. It will help identify the conditions of teaching and learning, the leadership and management styles, the level of community participation and commitment that aids effective learning. This would serve as a good source to be replicated in Government schools in order to achieve the

desired quality. It is envisaged that this study will serve as a foundation for the improvement of quality in the system as a whole.

29. This study would further inform policy since The Gambia is on the verge of preparing a new fifteen year Education Policy starting in 2004. Reviews conducted at the mid-term and at the tail end of the policy revealed that the quality of education especially at the Government Basic Level schools leaves much to be desired. This is manifested clearly in the MLA Report and the West African Examination Council report of the Primary School Leaving Certificate Examination, in which the private schools are at the top on the performance ladder. This study would therefore be a contributing element in the designing of the next education policy whose principal objective would be the provision of quality basic education for all by 2015.

30. The report will be a useful tool to inform the system on those school effectiveness factors present in the private schools that are contributing to the high performance in the private schools. It will bring out information on the kind of support Government should focus on in its schools to help create the environment for high performance.

31. Since the MLA Report showed clearly the strengths and weaknesses of all the educational regions, the survey report would also be useful information for Regional Directors who will be in charge of the various regions in the decentralization process to address the problems faced by the regions in terms of education effectiveness. Inspectors, Regional Training Officers as well as Teacher trainers will find the report useful in identifying areas to be focused on in Inspection and Monitoring and In-service training as well as pre-service training.

32. The lessons gained from the study of Private Schools may also help in strengthening Public/Private/Community partnership in all schools.

3. LITERATURE REVIEW: INVESTIGATING QUALITY FACTORS IN PRIVATE SCHOOLS

3.1. Introduction

33. The Literature review is substantially based on the works of Heneveld and Craig on Quality of Primary Education in Sub-Saharan Africa. Their Work has brought together findings on school effectiveness and school improvement movements from the United States, United Kingdom, Australia, Canada and the Netherlands. The findings went further to identify the characteristics of excellent schools and elements outside the school that aid school improvement. And given the fact that it is alleged that there are more reviews than studies on school effectiveness than the actual studies conducted, it is prudent to make reference to a comprehensive review such as the one referred to in this study.

34. Improving student learning achievement is the major goal by which school effectiveness is judged. Much of the research on school effectiveness factors has come from the school effectiveness and school improvement movements. A third approach to research in this area has used survey methods to identify good schools and then studied school-level variables in those schools (Dalin et al, 1992).

3.2. Research on school effectiveness factors

35. Research from the school effectiveness movements emphasises the use of quantitative analytic techniques to determine how many of the students' academic achievement can be "explained" by different inputs. Such an approach includes strategies from educators and economists. Among educators, the emphasis has been to identify the factors that are most important in determining school achievement and to weigh the factors in terms of "significance". On the other hand, the emphasis among economists is to "weigh" factors as well as search for the "least cost" mix inputs for producing a given level of student learning. The results of this research, which have been used to argue for investments in those inputs alone or in combination, are most significantly related to student learning outcomes.

36. Most of the studies on school effectiveness factors are based on research mainly from the United States or the United Kingdom. Most recently, Australia, Canada and the Netherlands have been added to the growing research literature on school effectiveness factors.

37. In the United States, the Effective Schools Movement began in the 1960s. From this period to 1976, only descriptive studies of individual effective schools were produced. British researchers in the 1970s identified a range of practices that were thought to improve student achievement regardless of socio-economic background. Thus, although British and American researchers have suggested a list of slightly different school effectiveness factors, they cited the most common process and organisational factors as follows:

▪ **Process factors:**

- Clear goals and high expectations;
- Collaborative planning and collegial relationship;
- Sense of community;
- Order and discipline; and
- Flexibility and autonomy.

▪ **Organisational factors:**

- Strong parent and community support;
- Effective support from the education system;
- Adequate resources;
- School-wide staff development;
- Effective leadership;
- A capable teaching force;
- Maximised learning time;
- Variety in teaching time;
- Curriculum articulation and organisation;
- School-wide recognition of academic success;
- Staff stability; and
- Frequent, well-supervised homework.

38. Farrel (1989) contended that during the early 1970s, studies in developing countries similar to those undertaken in the United States and United Kingdom, concerning factors that affect student achievement, were reported (Schiefelbein and Farrel 1973) in Chile and then Uganda (Heyneman 1976). Results from these and many of those that followed showed a marked difference between developing and industrial nations in the importance of school-related factors on student achievement. The quality of the school (in-school variables) seemed to influence student achievement more in developing nations than in industrialised nations where school quality was overshadowed by the child's socio-economic status/family background (out-of-school variables).

39. In reviewing most recent studies from developing countries, sponsored by United States Agency for International Development (USAID), Levin and Lockheed (1993) summarised school effectiveness factors as:

▪ **Necessary basic inputs:**

- Instructional materials such as textbooks, supplementary teachers' guides and materials library books, etc;
- A curriculum with appropriate scope and sequence and content related to pupils' experience;
- Time for learning (the number and length of school days); and
- Teaching practices (active student learning to include discussion, group work, etc.)

▪ **Facilitating conditions:**

- Community involvement, to include good school/community relations and parental involvement in the school;
- School-based professionalism to include leadership by the School head-teacher, collegiality and commitment, accountability through assessment and supervision, and support;
- Flexibility relevant to pupil curricula, adjustments in level and pace, organisational flexibility to include school clusters, multi-grade teaching, and pedagogical flexibility to include teaching innovations; and
- The will to act, i.e. having vision and using de-centralised, school-based solution to problems (Lockheed and Verspoor 1991).

40. While these school effectiveness factors are similar to those identified in studies in industrial nations, there are other factors found to be important in developing countries, which include adequate materials and industrial support for teachers and students, an appropriate language of instruction, and healthy students. Effectiveness factors should be viewed as potential contributors to school quality. Factors interact to reinforce each other, work together and improve student achievement. The difficulty in analysing data and replicating studies of the complex interplay among factors affecting school effectiveness makes uncertain the empirical base for generalised conclusions about what makes a school effective. However, the common findings across settings and using different analytic techniques suggest that effective schools are characterised by factors identified previously.

3.3. Research on school improvement factors

41. Research from the school improvement movement, while drawing on the model of the school effectiveness, emphasises the process change in school. As such, the research methods used have tended to be qualitative relying on open-ended interviews and observations.

42. The strength of school improvement research lies in its concentration on how change occurs in school systems. It tends to be holistic and action-oriented, often proposing improvement strategies that seek to achieve long-term goals. Huberman and Miles (1984), Fullan (1991) identified key themes on school improvement to include:

- Effective leadership;
- Shared vision-building and support of school improvement permeating the organisation at both the school and district levels;
- Commitment and acceptance of school improvement efforts;
- Active initiation and participation;
- Changes in behaviour and belief;
- Collaborative planning and decision-making;
- Organisational policies, support for action and press for improvement;
- Staff development and resource assistance;
- Monitoring efforts for accountability and improvement; and
- Recognition for jobs well done.

43. The school improvement tradition has had less impact on educational research in developing countries than research on school effectiveness. Dalin et al (1992) contended that the only extensive application of this approach in the documentary centres has been the recent study of reforms in Bangladesh, Columbia and Ethiopia. Their findings about the characteristics of excellent schools are consistent with the findings for industrial countries.

3.4. Advantages of blending the qualitative and quantitative approaches

44. School improvement research (qualitative approach) identifies factors that facilitate the change process in schools, and the research results often confirm the findings of school effectiveness research (quantitative approach) and provides insights into “how” to go about change.

45. Both approaches look at the problem of how to make schools effective from different perspectives that complement each other. Thus, if education planners and policy-makers are to make use of the findings that are common to both traditions, they need a conceptual framework that integrates them into a form that can be used for programme planning. The conceptual framework developed identifies 18 key factors that influence student outcomes as shown below:

1. Supporting inputs

- Strong parent and community support
- Effective support from the Education system
- Adequate material support
 - Frequent and appropriate teacher development activities
 - Sufficient textbooks and other materials
 - Adequate facilities

2. Enabling conditions

- Effective leadership
- A capable teaching force
- Flexibility and autonomy
- High time in school

3. School climate

- High expectations of students
- Positive teacher attitudes
- Order and discipline
- Organised curriculum
- Rewards and incentives

4. Teaching/learning process

- High learning time
- Variety in teaching strategies
- Frequent homework
- Frequent student assessment and feedback

5. Student outcomes

- Participation
- Academic achievement
- Social skills
- Economic success

6. Contextual factors

- International
- Cultural
- Political
- Economic.

46. The characteristics of effective schools that affect student outcomes, and the student outcomes they influence, are embedded in an institutional, cultural, social, and political context that greatly influence how school factors interact with each other and how effective a school can become (Chubb and Moe 1990). Institutionally, the nature of

the administrative structure over the school, the level of democratization and professionalism in the system, its resources, and other factors condition how a school functions. In developing countries, including those in Africa, cultural and social norms influence the schools' functioning even more than in the industrial countries because the school is an imported institution. The community can be supportive or hostile towards the school. Ethnic, linguistic and social differences can constrain interaction among students and between students and teachers. Teaching methods, subject matter and school head teacher and teacher-pupil relations are sensitive to these norms. Politics can also influence school quality by, for example, hampering the schools' operation during times of political strife or by groups in different regions in a country. All of these factors, external to the school, and others, condition how effective a school can become. Public policy therefore needs to pay attention to them. However, change in factors external to the school is not the subject of this report, so the conceptual framework does not look at them in detail.

47. In conclusion, therefore, the findings of research from the School Effectiveness and the School Improvement traditions have been integrated to select and define those factors that we concluded determine the quality of education in Sub-Saharan Africa. The resulting Conceptual Framework summarizes this integration with definitions and indicators for each factor that has been derived from the literature. This work has been done with African schools in mind, but one must still apply this framework to the African school setting with caution because the amount of actual research in the developing world, and particularly in Africa, upon which the framework is based, is limited. However, if this limitation is recognized and the logic of the framework's development is accepted, the framework can be used to assess the potential efficacy of recent World-Bank-financed projects that seek to improve the quality of primary education in Sub-Saharan Africa.

3.4.1. Research on school effectiveness factors/school environmental factors and pupils learning outcomes in West African sub-region

48. Not many studies on school effectiveness factors and students learning outcomes have been carried out in the developing countries especially in Sub-Saharan Africa. Many universities in the developing countries particularly sub Saharan Africa only conduct research for mainly academic reasons. The research division of WAEC has in recent years carried out studies on school effectiveness factors and pupils performance.

49. The Accra Department of Research Division, Ghana (RPA/ 1 1997) studied trends in Senior Secondary School Certificate Examinations (SSSCE) 'students' performance in WAEC exams in Ghana. Observed low performance in exams/tests had been contended to be due to "some factors resident in schools" among others. The study revealed that schools require some basic facilities, which include school buildings, relevant books and other instructional materials. These have to be adequate and in good condition for schools to function properly. Unfortunately, there is hardly any senior secondary school that can boast of adequate qualities of these basic facilities. According to the study, it is also a human fact that resources, human and materials are not equitably distributed among schools in Ghana. Thus some schools remain perpetually as Grade one school and others Grade three.

50. Grade one schools are effective schools and consistently perform better than Grade three schools, since they are perceived to have the effectiveness factors unlike Grade three schools.

51. In another study (part one) carried out by the Lagos Department of the Research Division (1998) the features of a good school environment were identified. The

study (PPL/2/98) revealed that school environment is vital to students' performance, highlighting that most of the studies on environment and learning carried out in Nigeria have not been conclusive.

52. The second part of the study, investigated the effects of environmental factors on students' performance at the SSCE. The study (RPL/1/2000) revealed that students in schools considered to be 'good' performed significantly better than those in 'poor' schools with better environments associated with improve performances. The study also confirmed that features of a good school environment are significantly related to performance in English language and Mathematics.

53. In The Gambia, the MLA study carried out by DOSE and SQAD is part of the Education for All (EFA) assessment for The Gambia. It assessed the levels of learning achievements /outcomes accomplished by pupils in Grade 4 in the four core subjects of Maths, English, SES and General Science. The Gambian studies also looked at some school and home factors and their effect on the pupils' performances. Factors such as unavailability of teaching and learning materials, poor school facilities, teacher qualifications were identified 'as being critical to pupils' learning outcomes.

54. These finding are generally in line with those in Nigeria, Ghana and industrialised countries.

55. It is therefore important to investigate the conditions of teaching and learning at both school and classroom levels to determine those conditions and processes that may contribute to the poor performance in the Government schools and the high performance in the Private schools.

56. The study investigated effectiveness factors in Private schools that led to high disparity in performance. It gave a detailed analysis of factors in Private schools that foster school effectiveness.

57. Quality in The Gambia education system has not been assessed systematically using factors from the school effectiveness or school improvement movements. The definition of quality education in The Gambia has also not been demonstrated to recognise qualitative schools. However, attempts have been made by few studies to assess students performance against a certain benchmark (MLA 2000 and NAT 2002), the effects of PTA involvement in school management has on school performance Educational Research Network for West And Central Africa (ERNWACA, 2000). The quality inputs on which government has invested in the 1990s in an attempt to improve the quality of education have also been enumerated (PER, 1998, 2001; Revised Education Policy (1998-2003). This section briefly looks at the performance of Grade 5 pupils in the recently conducted 2002 National Assessment Tests (NAT). The performance of students, by region and school type, in the four core subjects of Mathematics, General Science, Social & environmental Studies and English Language showed that Region 1 had the best performance with a mean of 48.31 in English Language; 38.70 in Science, 35.55 in Social & Environmental studies and 35.24 in Mathematics, followed by Region 2. Only Regions 1 and 2 performed above the national means in all the core subjects. Analyses of performance also indicated that pupils in private schools performed significantly better than their colleagues in Mission and Government Schools; and like MLA study, only a small number of pupils were able to score within the mastery level of 70 %. The vast majority of pupils' performance in all the four core subjects was below mastery level learning.

4. QUANTITATIVE INVESTIGATION

58. This section of the study focuses on the re-analysis of the quantitative data obtained from the MLA study (2000), with additional data collection and analysis of the data by including family background, teacher experience and qualifications, teaching and assessment method. It also investigates additional dimensions by reanalysing the data by school type. The original sample sizes for the school questionnaires included only two private schools and thus the responses from the two Head Teachers could not allow for significant analysis. Questionnaires were administered in additional seven schools covering three teachers in each school. The current analysis now captures nine private schools and twenty-seven teachers.

4.1. Background factors

4.1.1. School location

59. The provision of education to the citizenry of a country is predominantly a Government responsibility. However, the demand for education far exceeds its supply and hence the fulfilment of the right for every citizen to education cannot entirely be met by Government for various reasons. The basic rationale for private pressure on the public education system is to provide options to individuals in a free market economy. Private schools levy charges to meet their operational costs and hence their location is determined by financial viability rather than social, or equity reasons. It is therefore not surprising to find all the private schools in The Gambia located in urban areas. Mission schools have been traditionally grounded in the spreading of religious beliefs. It was logical for the Missionaries participation in the delivery of educational services, to start from the urban areas before venturing into the hinterlands. As a result, 40.6 % of parents in the urban areas send their children to mission schools. Notwithstanding, mission schools have also spread through out the country and consequently 36.7 % of parents in rural communities and 22.71 % in rural towns have their children in mission schools. Owing up to its responsibility for an equitable distribution of educational opportunities with a bias towards targeting the poor and deprived communities, 14.3 % of parents in urban areas send their children to government schools compared to 46.6 % and 39.2 % for rural areas and rural towns respectively.

Table 1 Location of schools by school type

School type		Location of school			Total
		Urban	Rural	Rural-Town	
Government	% within school type	14.26	46.57	39.17	100
Mission	% within school type	40.60	36.70	22.71	100
Private	% within school type	100			100
Total	% within school type	21.12	43.65	35.24	100

4.1.2. Family background and support

60. The Gambia is a secular state with about 95 % Muslims. In spite of the fact that at the primary level, all the mission schools are managed by the various Christian denominations, the majority of students in mission schools are from Muslim families. Faith does not deter, nor is it an obstacle, to enrolment in mission schools. It should be noted here that mission schools are supported by government through a grant that covers staff salaries. The Government also finances the construction of classroom facilities. Thus, mission schools are subject to the same regulations as public schools in terms of fees levied on students. The cost burden of education is a deterrent to enrolment and choice of school type; the poorer the family, the less likelihood for it to send children to private schools. One's level of educational attainment and occupation has a direct bearing on one's income earning and hence the choice of school type for the children.

61. Only 3 % of mothers in the sample survey had post-secondary education, 14 % had secondary education compared to 33 % who had no formal education. 41 % of mothers had local Islamic (Dara) education and only 8 % stopped at the primary level. In comparison, 6% of fathers were reported to have post secondary education, 18 % had secondary education and 5 % had primary education. However, 22 % had no formal education while 48% had local Islamic education. This low academic attainment reflects on their occupations as mothers with 52 % being housewives and 32 % engaged in farming (including fishing) and petty trading. Only 7 % of them are professionals (public servants, teachers or doctor, lawyers etc.), and 8 % are engaged in business or other skilled trades. Of the fathers reported, 27 % are professional, 30 % are engaged in petty trading, skilled labour or business, while 44 % were farmers including fishermen.

Table 2 Highest academic qualification of parents by gender and school type

School Type	% within school type	Highest academic qualification of mother/female guardian						Total
		No formal schooling	Local Islamic school (Dara)	Primary school	Secondary Four	Post Secondary school training	College/ University	
Government	% male	21.94	52.99	4.99	15.36	0.93	3.79	100
	% female	33.07	46.93	8.14	9.93	0.71	1.21	100
Mission	% male	25.66	31.58	5.92	31.58	0.99	4.28	100
	% female	40	24.76	7.94	23.17	0.32	3.81	100
Private	% male		9.62		32.7	5.77	51.92	100
	% female	1.96	1.96	3.92	64.7	11.76	15.69	100
Total	% male	21.94	48.28	5.00	18.5	1.08	5.22	100
	% female	33.41	41.68	7.98	13.87	0.96	2.10	100

62. Educational attainment is an instrumental value in contributing to higher incomes for individuals. It can be observed that illiteracy is higher for female parents and while only 2 % of female illiterate parents could afford sending their children to private schools, 33 % and 40 % of them send their children to government and mission schools respectively. Conversely the majority of parents with post secondary and university education tend to send their children in private schools. Amongst parents with post secondary and university education, 85 % send their children to private schools while the rest had their wards in government and mission schools. It would appear that the higher

one's academic attainment, the more the likelihood to send children to private schools. Parental academic attainment and occupation impact on their ability to bear the burden of educational expenses. For example, while all parents with children in private schools provide transport for their wards, only 14 % and 28 % could afford to do so in the government and mission schools respectively.

4.1.3. Teacher experience and qualification

63. The majority of heads in private schools are female (67 %) while those in Government and Mission schools are male (81 % and 67 % respectively). Conditions in rural settlements are very different from those in the urban with the former having harsher living conditions. With only 21.12 % of schools in urban areas and the natural tendency for males to assume more demanding responsibilities or have greater potential to withstand harsher living conditions, the domination of male heads in government schools is not unexpected. The national representation of the gender divide amply demonstrates this trend (27.69 % female and 72.31 % male).

Table 3 Sex of head teacher

School Type		Sex of Head Teacher		Total
		Male	Female	
Government	% within school type	80.85	19.15	100
Mission	% within school type	66.67	33.33	100
Private	% within school type	33.33	66.67	100
Total	% within school type	72.31	27.69	100

64. In order to provide any meaningful professional support to the staff, head teachers are expected to be both academically and professionally qualified. Whereas in government and mission schools the majority of head teachers have secondary 4 (50 %) and GCE 'O' level (47 %) as their highest qualification, the highest academic qualification of a head in private schools is GCE 'O' levels and not a single head in this category has secondary 4 as the highest qualification.

Table 4 Highest academic & professional qualification of head teachers

School type		Highest academic qualification of head teacher				Highest professional qualification of head teacher			
		Secondary Four	GCE O' Level	GCE A' Level	Degree	PTC	HTC	Diploma	Degree
Government	% within sch. type	50	47.83		2.17	93.62	2.13	2.13	2.13
Mission	% within sch type	50	37.5		12.5	88.89			11.11
Private	% within sch type	62.5	12.5	25	100	33.33	33.33	22.22	11.11
Total	% within sch type	43.55	48.39	1.61	6.45	84.62	6.15	4.62	4.62

65. In terms of highest professional qualification, the majority of head teachers in both government and mission schools have PTC as their highest professional qualification. In the private schools, however, 33 % have HTC and Diploma as their highest qualification. In this category too, 11 % have degrees as their qualification while only one out of 47 teachers in the government schools have a degree.

4.1.4. Teacher attitudes

66. Parents' and society's perception of teachers' attitudes is relevant to quality education. Parents may express dissatisfaction towards teachers' attitudes as it relates to punctuality. Overall 70 % of parents have expressed dissatisfaction towards teachers' attitudes as a result of teacher absenteeism. Of that number, 87 % of them have their children in private schools compared to 65 % of those with wards in the government. Lateness was also reportedly high, (67 %) amongst teachers nationally, with 86 % of parents having wards either in private or mission schools expressing dissatisfaction about teachers' lateness compared to 63 % for those with children in government schools. It would appear that parents with children in government schools are less concerned about teachers' attitudes than those with children in mission and private schools.

Table 5 Parent dissatisfaction towards teachers' attitudes

School type		Parents' dissatisfaction due to teacher lateness		Parents' dissatisfaction due to teacher absenteeism	
		No	Yes	No	Yes
Government	% within school type	37.04	62.96	35.03	64.97
Mission	% within school type	14.12	85.88	10.11	89.89
Private	% within school type	14.29	85.71	13.33	86.67
Total	% within school type	32.57	67.43	30.20	69.80

4.2. School conditions

4.2.1. Availability and use of teaching aids and learning materials

67. Parents may choose school type based on the availability of teaching learning resources. Even though facilities are generally better in private schools, more parents (85 %) whose children attend private schools complained about the inadequacy or low quality of facilities than parents (50 %) whose children attend public schools.

Table 6 Parents' dissatisfaction due to inadequate teaching facilities

School type		Parents' dissatisfaction due to inadequate teaching facilities		Total
		No	Yes	
Government	% within school type	50.25	49.75	100
Mission	% within school type	19.48	80.52	100
Private	% within school type	15.38	84.62	100
Total	% within school type	45.16	54.84	100

68. Chalk and blackboard are the most common teaching resources in developing countries. Therefore their presence in any school can enhance students learning if used properly. Nationally, 33.85 % of schools do not have adequate chalk supply. All such schools are either government or mission schools. Private schools do not have problems with chalk supply. However, the situation with regard to blackboards is much better in that only about 6 % of government schools and 11 % of mission schools do not have adequate blackboards.

Table 7 Adequacy of blackboards and chalk by school type

School type		Adequacy of Blackboards		Adequacy of Chalk		
		Available	Inadequate	Available	Inadequate	Not Available
Government	% within school type	93.62	6.38	59.57	38.30	2.13
Mission	% within school type	88.89	11.11	66.67	33.33	
Private	% within school type	100		100		
Total	% within school type	93.85	6.15	66.15	32.31	1.54

69. The availability of teaching and learning materials are a very important input that can improve learning outcomes. These inputs include teaching syllabus, pupils' books, teachers' guides, dictionaries, vanguarders, computers, rulers etc.

70. In the MLA study, it could be observed that the government schools are the least endowed with teaching syllabus, pupils' books, teachers' guide and dictionaries. Whereas 89 % of private schools have adequate syllabus, only 32 % of government and 13 % of mission schools have adequate syllabus. A similar trend can be observed when pupils' textbooks are considered. 67 % of private schools have adequate pupils textbooks while 56 % of mission and only 40 % of government schools have adequate pupils textbooks.

Table 8 Adequacy of syllabuses & pupils' books by school type

School type		Adequacy of syllabuses			Adequacy of pupils' books		
		Available	Inadequate	Not Available	Available	Inadequate	Not Available
Government	% within school type	32.61	34.78	32.61	40.43	53.19	6.38
Mission	% within school type	12.5	37.5	50	55.56	33.33	11.11
Private	% within school type	88.89	11.11		66.67	33.33	
Total	% within school type	38.1	31.75	30.16	46.15	47.69	6.15

71. Teachers' guides are in short supply in both government and mission schools (33 % of both combined). In the private schools, 89 % of schools had adequate teachers' guides. Like other teaching and learning materials, availability of adequate dictionaries and computers is higher in private schools (67 %) than government and mission schools where only 6 % and 11 % have adequate dictionaries respectively.

Table 9 Adequacy of teachers' guides

School type		Adequacy of teachers' guides		
		Available	Inadequate	Not available
Government	% within school type	32.61	60.87	6.52
Mission	% within school type	33.33	55.56	11.11
Private	% within school type	88.89	11.11	
Total	% within school type	40.63	53.13	6.25

Table 10 Adequacy of dictionaries & computers by school type

School type		Adequacy of dictionaries			Adequacy of computers		
		Available	Inadequate	Not available	Available	Inadequate	Not available
Government	% within school type	6.38	23.4	70.21	4.26	4.26	91.49
Mission	% within school type	11.11	22.22	66.67		12.5	87.5
Private	% within school type	66.67	22.22	11.11			
Total	% within school type	15.38	23.08	61.54	3.64	5.45	90.91

72. The availability and utilisation of learning materials are positively correlated to learning outcomes and student achievement. Although only 46 % of parents provide textbooks for their children, when disaggregated by school type, 41 % of parents with children in government schools and 62 % in mission schools provide textbooks for their children compared to all parents (100%) with children in private schools (table 3.11). This therefore implies that all children in private schools will have textbooks provided by parents, which enhances learning achievements.

Table 11 Provision of textbooks by parents

School type		Do you provide textbooks?		Total
		No	Yes	
Government	% within school type	58.92	41.08	100
Mission	% within school type	37.88	62.12	100
Private			100.00	100
Total	% within school type	53.76	46.24	100

73. The availability of teaching learning materials and student access to library and resource centres are critical quality inputs. As far as libraries are concerned, there are no differences between government, mission and private schools. Over 61 % of all school types in the survey are with libraries. However, 50 % of the mission schools are with a resource centre while 38 % of government and 33 % of private schools are with resource centres. This implies that the mission schools are more endowed with resource centres than both government and private schools.

Table 12 Availability of library and resource centres.

School type		Do you have a library?		Do you have a resource center?	
		Yes	No	Yes	No
Government	% within sch. type	38.24	61.76	62.07	37.93
Mission	% within sch type	37.50	62.50	50.00	50.00
Private	% within sch type	33.33	66.67	66.67	33.33
Total	% within sch type	37.25	62.75	61.36	38.64

4.2.2. Discipline

74. How a teacher views his role in helping to prepare students to be productive citizens is in part a reflection of his values about behaviour, and its rewards and consequences. Parents and society expect a lot from schools and it is not uncommon for some to blame schools for indiscipline in children. The survey reveals that 78 % of parents expressed dissatisfaction due to lack of discipline in school and there seem to be no significant difference between parents with children in all types of schools. The marginal difference by school type is probably an indication of the seriousness of this concern and how it could positively impact on learning outcomes.

Table 13 Parents' dissatisfaction due to lack of discipline

School type		Parents' dissatisfaction due to lack of discipline		Total
		No	Yes	
Government	% within School Type	24.72	75.28	100
Mission	% within School Type	7.32	92.68	100
Private	% within School Type	15.38	84.62	100
Total	% within School Type	21.75	78.25	100

4.3. Teaching and learning

4.3.1. Extra tuition/coaching

75. The availability of teaching learning materials in schools helps to enrich the teaching and learning environment. Textbooks contribute positively to learning outcomes and achievement. The availability of teaching learning materials in both schools and in homes is essential. Extra teaching and/or coaching are given to children to supplement or complement the learning activities, which take place in schools. If this phenomenon were found only in public or mission schools, then one could have been tempted to conclude that not enough of teaching learning takes place in these schools. However, it is also given to children in private schools only that duration and mode of administering the teaching/coaching varies. About 16 % of parents do not provide extra teaching/coaching for their children and of these only 3 % have their wards in private schools, compared to 14 % and 25 % (table 3.14) who had their children in government and mission schools respectively. Of the 70.69% of parents with children in private schools who provided two hours or more of extra teaching or coaching, 58.49 % of them had a special teacher or used the services of the class teacher after school. However, 58.59 % and 50.88 % respectively of parents with children in government or mission schools provided two or more hours of coaching with only 26.46 % and 36.15 % of them utilising the services of class teachers after school or a special teacher.

76. If extra teaching or coaching contributes to learning achievement, the differential impact would be determined by the service providers. Parents with children in private schools rely more on class teachers or special teachers (58.49 % of them) or provide the coaching themselves (30.19 % of them) compared to 26.46 % of parents with children in government schools who utilised class teachers or special teachers, with only 16.61 % of them coaching their children. Teaching begins from the known to the unknown and one teaches only what one knows, hence the higher the level of academic attainment of the teacher, the more he/she has to offer to the learner. Parents with children in private schools have a higher academic qualification and could therefore provide better tutoring for their children. Not surprisingly, 56.92 % of parents with children in government schools rely on siblings providing extra teaching or coaching at home compared to only 11.32 % of parents with wards in private schools (table 3.15).

Table 14 Amount of extra teaching/coaching children receive(s) a day

School type		Amount of extra teaching/coaching child(ren) receive(s) a day				
		0	1 hour	2 hours	More than 2 hours	None
Government	% within school type	0.05	26.87	39.47	19.12	14.49
Mission	% within school type		24.31	30.83	20.05	24.81
Private	% within school type		25.86	43.10	27.59	3.45
Total	% within school type	0.04	26.40	38.07	19.49	15.99

Table 15 Who does the teaching/coaching

School type		Who does the teaching/coaching?				Total
		Parent	Brothers/sisters	Class teacher after school	Special teacher	
Government	% within school type	16.61	56.92	11.91	14.55	100
Mission	% within school type	25.00	38.85	7.77	28.38	100
Private	% within school type	30.19	11.32	30.19	28.30	100
Total	% within school type	18.30	52.84	11.78	17.09	100

4.4. School management

4.4.1. Monitoring and supervision of teachers

77. Teacher monitoring and supervision by professional teachers in schools can contribute immensely in teacher performance, which could eventually help in improving student's learning outcomes.

Table 16 Regularity of checking teachers' work

School type		Regularity of checking teachers' work			
		Daily	2 to 3 times weekly	Fortnightly	Occasionally
Government	% within school type	21.43	42.86	16.67	19.05
Mission	% within school type	22.22	66.67	11.11	
Private	% within school type	66.67	33.33		
Total	% within school type	28.33	45.00	13.33	13.33

78. The regularity of checking teachers' work varies according to school type. In government schools, less than half (43 %) of the teacher's work are checked 2 to 3 times weekly, whereas in both mission and private schools, the regularity of checking teachers work is greater, 66 % in both cases. Occasional checking of teachers' work is only happening in government schools.

4.4.2. Professional development and support

79. In the private schools, 7 out of every 10 teachers (71 %) have a “very cordial” relationship with the head. The proportion of teachers with this type of relationship with their head is also higher in the mission schools (67 %) than in government schools (56 %). This shows that, almost half of the teachers in government schools do not have a cordial relationship with their heads.

Table 17 Teacher’s relationship with head teacher by school type

School type		Teacher’s relationship with head teacher		
		Very cordial	Cordial	Not cordial
Government	% within school type	55.56	44.44	
Mission	% within school type	66.67	25.00	8.33
Private	% within school type	71.43	28.57	
Total	% within school type	60..71	38.39	0.89

80. With regard to training which is a critical undertaking in the work of a teacher, there are more teachers in Government schools (23%) pursuing any training than those in both Mission schools (10%) and Private schools (18%). The same trend can be observed when one considers teachers pursuing further qualification in education – 63% are from government schools, none from Mission schools and (23%) in private schools.

Table 18 Pursuance of training courses/ further qualification in education by teachers

School type		Pursuing any training course		Pursuing a further qualification in education	
		No	Yes	No	Yes
Government	% within school type	76.92	23.08	36.36	63.64
Mission	% within school type	90.00	10.00	100	
Private	% within school type	82.14	17.86	76.92	23.08
Total	% within school type	79.61	20.39	65.79	34.21

81. The opportunity to undertake training and pursue further qualification in education is therefore greater among government teachers than their counterparts in both Mission and Private schools.

Table 19 Head teacher's assistance to teachers

School type		Head teacher's assistance in the form of checking of lesson notes		Head teacher's assistance in the form of suggestion about teaching aids		Head teacher's assistance in the form of school-based workshops	
		No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes
Government	% within school type	27.50	72.50	16.28	83.72	16.28	83.72
Mission	% within school type	37.50	62.50	33.33	66.67	33.33	66.67
Private	% within school type	11.11	88.89		100	11.11	88.89
Total	% within school type	26.32	73.68	16.39	83.61	18.03	81.97

82. The assistance given by head teachers to their teachers either in the form of checking lesson notes or giving suggestions about teaching aids contributes to professional development. In both cases, private school teachers benefit more from head teacher assistance followed by government and mission schoolteachers respectively.

83. School-based professional development has the potential of improving teacher effectiveness and subsequently impacting on student performance. The level of head teacher's assistance in the form of school-based workshops is very encouraging (government 83.72 %, missions 66.67 % and private 88.89 %). However, the high frequency of school based workshops in government schools has not produced the expected corresponding result in student performance. It is therefore important to revisit the quality of such workshops in government schools especially as they relate to students learning achievement.

84. Just over half (53.85 %) of all schools were visited at least once a term by education school inspectors. Government schools were the most frequently visited, 63.83 % when compared to mission and private schools. It is interesting to note that despite the low level of inspection of mission and private school, their performance in the MLA was better than government schools. However, mission and private schools being under their own management structures and independent monitoring and supervision systems can help to explain the inconsistency.

Table 20 Frequency of education inspectors' visits by school type

School type		Frequency of education inspectors' visits			
		Termly	Annually	Rarely	Never
Government	% within school type	63.83	14.89	14.89	6.38
Mission	% within school type	33.33	11.11	44.44	11.11
Private	% within school type	22.22	22.22	44.44	11.11
Total	% within school type	53.85	15.38	23.08	7.69

5. QUALITATIVE INVESTIGATION

85. In the literature review, the concept of quality is discussed, as presented by both the school effective and school improvement movements. The review highlighted the advantage of blending the qualitative and quantitative approaches in conducting research on school quality.

86. This section discusses the effects of these factors vis-à-vis the quality of the school. It focuses on the presence or otherwise, of organisational factors, as well as the “necessary inputs” and “facilitating condition” which may contribute to school effectiveness and high student achievement.

5.1. Teaching and learning

87. Two private schools were visited in which classroom observations were made. This section discusses the observations made after a total of eight lessons from across the grade levels in two schools were observed as shown in the Annex 1.

88. The teachers prepared their teaching records, schemes and lesson notes and, because of this, they taught with enthusiasm and confidence. The teachers within the same grade level prepared their lessons and schemes together, collaborated in thinking of ideas, and the use of resources and methodology. This is acknowledged as a school effectiveness factor.

89. The lessons observed were all linked to the previous ones, which indicated continuity and progression in the teaching and learning process. Pupils being called to the chalkboard to try out challenging work together with the rest of the class complemented the inputs given by the teachers. This helped in the learning process as most pupils demonstrated that they could learn from their peers.

90. Pupils’ gains in terms of learning achievement are a major goal by which school effectiveness is judged. The teachers made sure that the pupils, for most of the time, took care of their own learning and were fully engaged. The quiet and dormant ones among them were eventually drawn into the lesson.

91. In ninety percent of the classes visited the methods employed by the teachers suited the ability and age range of the pupils. They worked in peer groups and engaged in writing, drawing, measuring and other forms of practical work. This flexibility is a process factor that determines the effectiveness of any lesson.

92. The availability of learning materials was evident and they assisted the learning process. In the classes observed, the pupils were in possession of additional materials, apart from the basic textbooks and notebooks. The school recommended the course books and supplementary readers. There were also resources provided by their parents in the form of rulers, mathematical set boxes, vocabulary books and a book exclusively for homework or for extra tuition.

93. Apart from the practice done by the pupils towards the end of the lessons, periodic tests were given to them and these were seen in their notebooks. The assessment records in all the classes visited indicated that frequent student assessment has been taking place and feedback given by the teachers. The pupils in all the classes were encouraged to do their corrections and were interested in their achievements.

94. The pupils in one of the schools have extra tuition organised by the school. This takes place after school following a two-hour break. During this period, the class

teachers reinforce work done in the morning. This efficient utilisation of time is an important factor in the school's effectiveness and is evident in the teaching and learning process. The pupils in this school have more school contact time than their counterparts in government schools.

95. The climate of order and discipline, evident in the schools, is ideal for effective teaching and learning and was observed in almost all the classes visited. The relationship between the teachers and pupils was cordial and friendly and pupils raised their hands to be allowed to speak.

96. Class size, averaging thirty-eight, was an obvious and observable difference between these and government schools. It was also a factor, which one teacher explained, helped in treating the curriculum for the different abilities of the children.

97. In one of the schools, the teachers at the upper level teach according to their area of specialisation. The students here had the opportunity to interact with various personalities as well as specialists in their particular field.

5.2. Analysis and discussion

98. This section discusses the observations made during the class visits by focusing on preparation of lessons, teaching strategies, assessment, discipline and orderliness and, offers some recommendations.

5.2.1. Preparation of lessons

99. The preparation, in writing, of lesson is a vital factor in the teaching and learning process. It determines the focus and objective(s) of the lesson. The schools visited ensured that the teachers documented the schemes and lesson plans of the curriculum to be delivered. It was clear that the teachers were alert, prepared and ready to deliver their planned lessons. The level of monitoring by the senior teachers was evident in their signatures in the schemes and lesson notebooks of the teachers; it also indicated a high level of commitment, which encouraged this preparation.

100. SQAD report (2002) confirmed that in most of the public schools schemes and lesson plans are regularly prepared. It can therefore be argued that the absence of sanctions on teachers in public schools who do not document their plans could be the cause of their laxity, resulting in poorly presented lessons and poor performance by the pupils.

101. The availability of resources in the classrooms of the private school helped the learning process and was a motivating factor for both teachers and pupils in the teaching and learning process.

102. The expectations are that the pupils will have all the tools they need, including those required for practical and project work. The implications of this are that these students are likely to perform better than those who struggle for basic resources such as notebooks, textbooks and pencils and whose teachers are without cardboard and markers to prepare charts, games etc.

5.2.2. Teaching strategies

103. The teaching strategies employed by the teachers in the schools in this study, are an indication that the students will learn well. The drift from the lecture method, which places the teacher as the "know all", to the interactive method which encourages

the full participation of the pupils, has ensured that the learners are actively involved in their own learning.

104. It was found out that the pupils were more confident in expressing themselves, and coupled with the motivation provided by the teachers, most of the lessons were well understood. This was evident from the oral responses of the pupils and work done by them later in the lesson. There is no doubt that the methods employed by the teachers were effective.

5.2.3. Assessment

105. Assessment, as a form of monitoring of the teaching and learning process, is frequently carried out in the form of tests, class work and home assignments. These frequent student assessments and feedback are undoubtedly factors that have contributed to the high performance of the pupils.

106. Extra contact time for the pupils during their “studies period” (extra tuition) in the afternoons in school, as seen in one school, definitely has some impact on performance. There is a correlation between extra classes and high performance, as shown by the higher performance achieved by the private schools, most of which have either extra contact time in the schools or at home with private tutors.

5.2.4. Discipline and orderliness

107. The pupils in the private schools manifest self-discipline in their approach and the way they speak to their teachers. This also comes out in the way they dress and comport themselves at work.

108. The high level of discipline and orderliness observed in the classrooms is an indication that good behaviour is being instilled in the pupils. This will create a conducive learning environment, and have an impact on the pupil’s comportment, dedication and eventually their performance.

5.2.5. Recommendations

109. There is a relationship between the educational inputs on the one hand and out comes on the other. In our quest to enable our pupils perform well and achieve higher standards, it is recommended that the following be adopted:

- The goals and objective(s) of the course work and single lessons set the tone for the teaching and learning process. The preparation of lessons before teaching should be emphasised and seen to be very important.
- The availability of teaching and learning resources, which is an important factor in the delivery of the curriculum should be given a higher priority. The DOSE should ensure this by increasing the budgetary allocation on learning materials for public schools.
- Child centred and democratic approaches in learning should be encouraged. The pupils perform, understand and apply what they have learnt better, when they take charge of their own learning. Teaching includes discussions, group work, project work etc.
- The 880 hours pupil contact time which is recommended, but which is yet to be achieved, should be closely looked into. The afternoon classes in Government schools should be thoroughly supervised by the school

administration to ensure value for money. DOSE should endeavour to engage separate cohort of teachers in the afternoon.

- Self-discipline and orderliness should be emphasised. The culture and ethos of our education institutions should be characterised and shaped by a policy addressing school discipline and codes of conduct.
- The upward mobility of teachers in terms of promotion should take cognisance of their ability to develop self-discipline in the pupils.
- They should also be able to put in place a school discipline policy and measures to create an orderly learning environment, which the learners themselves cherish and have a sense of ownership of. There should also be recognition of work well done and on the other hand sanctions for defiance.

5.3. Teachers

5.3.1. Introduction

110. Six teachers participated in this study, and the questions they answered were intended to elude information on their backgrounds; the availability of resources in their schools; issues on staff motivation and incentives; learning and teaching strategies; management, support and supervision; and their general reflections. All the interviews were structured and conducted individually from 2nd to 3rd April 2003 in two selected private schools in the Greater Banjul Area.

111. Of the six participants, four were Gambians and two Sierra Leoneans. Although five of them began their careers as untrained teachers, they all received formal training to become qualified teachers. In addition, they individually benefited from one form of in-service training or the other, which they all considered useful. Since none of them has a degree, the quality of these teachers is comparable to the qualified teachers in government and mission schools. One of them, for instance, went through the upgrading course, as many government teachers did.

112. However, even though they may have started off in either Government or Mission schools, they had finally decided to work in private schools. The reasons for this decision were consequently a matter of interest to the interviewers. Below are the findings based on the information elicited.

5.3.2. Findings

School choice

113. The factors that influenced the respondents' decision to opt for private schools varied from one person to the other. They ranged from lack of confidence to maintain their jobs in government schools as unqualified teachers to the challenges and keen competition that contributed to the rich experiences and ideas they gathered gradually. The key contributory factors they cited included the incentives they enjoyed, the degree of discipline maintained, the commitment of their staff, the strong leadership demonstrated by the Head teachers, and the support, interest and participation of the parents in school matters. The frequency of staff transfer, especially to schools upcountry, without the teachers' consent surfaced as a strong disincentive to teach for Government.

114. The working conditions and school environment were also significant factors. For them, class sizes of about forty made work much easier and desirable in

Mission and Private Schools than in Government schools where classes could comprise fifty or more pupils. Discipline was considered very bad in government schools; the pupils there were perceived to be more carefree, rowdy and neglected.

115. Even though the salary structure in the private schools may not be vastly different from Government's in some cases, the fees paid by the pupils for extra tuition – provided by their class teachers after normal school hours – supplemented the teachers' earnings tremendously. Therefore, although some teachers organised such classes at home, many had theirs in their school under the supervision of the Head teacher. Rent and transport allowances were paid to them, as in Government schools, but one of the respondents claimed that there were cases in which one's salary was linked to one's qualifications, which did not exist in public schools.

116. None of the schools had a loan scheme, but the teachers were at liberty to subscribe to the scheme run by The Gambia Teachers' Union, who offered such services to all teachers without discrimination.

117. Notwithstanding the edge they claimed over their colleagues in public schools, the interviewees wanted more fringe benefits; for example, in the form of 'medical cover' and prizes for performance. In fact, whilst one of them claimed that, at no cost to him, his children were attending the school where he worked, another of the same school wished that the teachers' children were awarded scholarships to attend the school at no cost to him. He said he was struggling to maintain his children in the school, which led to the inference that the school had either a differential policy for its teachers, or not all of them were aware of such opportunities.

Resources

118. Overall, the teachers expressed satisfaction at the resources provided by the schools. They described their classrooms as "well resourced" to the extent that each child had the required textbooks, especially for the core subjects. Although the Head teachers motivated them to purchase instructional materials for their classes, the proprietors, through the Heads, took full responsibility for the provision of instructional materials and furniture. The latter was evidently adequate and in good condition. All of these, the teachers felt, contributed to making the immediate environment learner-friendly and safe.

119. In contrast to the above, a teacher lamented the short supply of essentials in government schools, and complained that there was "too much talk about improvisation", thus putting undue stress on the teachers. She argued that certain instructional materials were better provided than improvised and that one could not improvise endlessly. She regretted that such basic materials as vanguarders were not available in government schools. Yet, in their school, videocassettes served as teaching-learning tools in some instances.

120. The study consistently revealed that all the teachers planned their lessons daily or weekly, spending about two hours daily, or five hours weekly, on this. Lesson preparation, according to the respondents, was neither done as a requirement nor an imposition from the school administration but as an important element or factor that enhances effective teaching. As one respondent put it, "if you do not plan, you cannot present a good lesson".

121. In spite of the teachers' conviction on the importance of lesson preparation and keeping relevant and up-to-date records, the senior staff provided guidance on the structure and content of such records, and regularly ascertained that they were well kept. More attention was however paid to the less experienced and junior teachers, whose records were corrected and commented on by their supervisors.

Supervision

122. The supervisory role of the senior staff was obvious, as evidenced by their signatures and comments in red ink. They reportedly observed lessons and gave support, encouragement and suggestions on teaching methodologies and techniques. A teacher disclosed that the staff in her school nicknamed their Head teacher “satellite” on account of her ability to spot errors either on the blackboard or in their records. This was highly appreciated by the entire staff, since she always corrected such errors.

123. Mixed messages were received on the degree of teacher participation in decision-making. Whilst some claimed that this was high, a particular participant felt differently. He thought participation did not go beyond the various committees they headed, such as the examination committee. In his opinion, “the Head was in charge”, and everyone’s responsibilities were clearly defined. Ironically, though, the Head teacher was not viewed as authoritarian or autocratic.

124. Whereas participation in decision-making was extended to the parents through Parent-Teacher Association (PTA) meetings and “Open Days” in one school, the Parent-Teacher Association in the other school was described as “dead” by one of the respondents. Nonetheless, the parents’ participation in the general life of both schools was most obvious, and it reportedly ranged from administrative matters to observation of actual teaching and the children’s work.

125. It was difficult to understand why a teacher downplayed the role of the parents in matters pertaining to teacher accountability, management, resource mobilisation and utilisation as well in teaching and learning activities. According to him, about 80 % of the parents did not bother about these. Generally, however, the parents were described as committed and concerned about the progress and welfare of their children. Even though they did not operate through any organised structure, such as a PTA, they paid high fees and ensured that their children were taught. They attended meetings when invited and held telephone conversations with the teachers. They paid a fee of D1800 (D600.00 per term) and D500 for admission.

126. One of the respondents said that the parents provided materials for them in the form of notes that were sometimes reproduced in numbers. They spent their resources to reproduce documents, and donated textbooks they considered useful to the school.

Teaching methods

127. Multiple approaches and strategies were used during the teaching-learning process. The interviewees claimed to approach their work from the pupils’ perspectives; i.e., everything was learner-centred, with emphasis on “quality teaching and learning”. Hence, the activities they mentioned included ‘explanation’, “interaction with students”; using “probing questions”; according students the “opportunity to practice” and allowing them to engage in “independent work”. The “enquiry method” and “play method” were also used. Periodic tests (conducted either monthly, termly or weekly), class work and oral responses from the pupils were indicators or criteria to measure achievement. The teachers claimed to balance their focus between knowledge, on the one hand, and skills and attitudes on the other. One of the teachers, for instance, cited drama as a means of inculcating a sense of responsibility in the students.

128. Records of work were up-to-date, and all teachers prepared them according to a format set by the administrative staff. This highlighted the subject, topic, work done, material used, reference and remarks. Going through the children’s copybooks, there was evidence of regular written work.

129. In each of the schools, school-based workshops were considered important for the professional and academic development of the staff. Therefore, workshops focused on perceived areas of weakness, whilst serving sometimes as avenues for disseminating or sharing innovative ideas. Teachers learned from their pupils and colleagues. As one teacher explained:

130. “If we [the teachers] have a problem that we cannot solve in Maths, for example, we ask the children to try to solve it. We also ask them to find out from their parents when they go home, and we ask for help from the teachers in the secondary section. We collaborate with everybody, and we don’t pretend to know everything. In fact, this morning, we had a problem, which was solved by a student. I gave him D50.00 as a reward.”

131. The findings from these interviews with teachers have been confirmed from the actual classroom observations as described earlier.

Time on task

132. To the respondents, teaching and learning are the most important activities in the school. To maximise actual ‘time on task’, time was not wasted unnecessarily. Thus, both teachers and pupils went to school on time. The administrative staff monitored compliance, and did not tolerate lateness. Teachers who went to school late had a red line drawn against their names, and permission must be sought before any teacher could leave the school premises during hours of work. Since the proprietor/proprietress could walk into the school at any time, everyone was put on their toes. Teachers who did not measure up to expectations were “got rid of”. So, all teachers strove to do their best. In School A, in addition to supervision by the Head, the Anglican Mission ensured that all the regulations were adhered to. They set the salaries.

133. The proprietress of one of the schools was reportedly fond of interacting with the pupils during her school rounds and getting information from them. She believes, according to one respondent, that “children don’t tell lies”.

Teacher perceptions

134. Qualitative research is associated with the perceptions of those who participate in such studies. One of its disadvantages is that it could be misleading to use the perceptions of individuals to make generalisations. Mindful of this, this study sought to probe into the teachers' perceptions of ‘effective teachers’ and ‘effective schools’. The responses appeared genuine, and are summarised below. For the respondents, an ‘effective teacher’ must:

- Devote a lot of time to preparation before actual teaching;
- Prepare documentation for all lessons and teach according to plan;
- Monitor what the pupils do and document it;
- Be a model to the children and behave well;
- Manage his class;
- Be resourceful, tolerant and interested in his work as well as his pupils; and
- Love the teaching profession, and sacrifice when need be.

135. From their perspective, therefore, effective schools “must have the capacity to produce good students”¹ and “allow teachers to administer corporal punishment” in order to maintain discipline. Other characteristics include enough materials, high quality teaching and a “good and functional administrative set-up”, supported by dedicated teachers.

136. One of the respondents could not see the difference between an effective school and an effective teacher, in that for him effectiveness is determined “by the end of year exam” and the degree of discipline maintained.

137. On other thoughts, the need for the re-introduction of remedial classes for slow learners was mentioned. Further, two respondents thought that teaching should be accorded the respect it deserves. These two were inspired to become teachers by their parents and they regarded teaching as “an honourable profession”.

Discussion

138. Teachers feature in school effectiveness research as an important variable. Their role “has long been recognised as central to the delivery as well as the quality of education” (Lockheed, 1991, p. 30). Therefore, their views on schooling must not be taken for granted. The participants in this study are not university graduates and do not keep abreast with educational research. Their opinions were thus grounded in their experience and knowledge garnered through time. The study has undoubtedly corroborated findings of previous studies, but it also questions a few assumptions. These are discussed below.

139. Of the factors that contribute to ‘student performance’ in the private schools that participated in the study, the following stand out clearly:

- The schools are autonomous; that is, Government does not control them directly. Hence, they are modelled or fashioned as desired by those who run them. This gives them a leeway to determine and develop a sense of direction for their staff. Their codes of conduct, rules, regulations, policies and sanction procedures are designed to suit their contexts, circumstances and objectives. Accordingly, the degree of autonomy enables the Heads to take initiatives without fear of being reprimanded for whatever innovations and adventures they wish to undertake. Thus, they can set the tone of their schools and devise rules and regulations that may not necessarily come down from some superstructure. Disciplinary action and other decisions can be implemented on teachers without delay. Consequently, the authority thus invested in the school Head tends to compel all staff to conform to the ethos set within. Invariably, though, the disadvantage is that teachers could be unjustly treated without recourse to any type of external arbitration or redress when they felt offended.
- The incentives and privileges accorded to the teachers, especially as fees for extra tuition, are a source of motivation and, consequently, have implications for performance. The level of supervision and the results-oriented stance of the statu quo, compounded by the parents’ keen interest in what their children do, keep the teachers alert. Expectations are undoubtedly high for both staff and pupils. Invariably, the teachers are aware that they operate in a situation in which they could be assessed at any time and without notice.
- The adequacy of the instructional materials provided, the small sizes of the classes and the ambience in the schools make working conditions

¹ It is regrettable that the interviewee was not probed further to state what a good student should or ought to be.

comparatively better and appreciable, hence the teachers are proud to associate with the school. Because their schools seem to be doing far better than many other schools, Mission or government, the teachers tend to develop a sense of confidence and accomplishment. In fact, in the issue of April 7, 2003, The Daily Observer quotes the foreign teachers in one of the two schools as having “argued that their school ranks amongst the best private schools in the country because of their dedication and hard work” (p. 2).

- Paradoxically, the study reveals that schools that tend to do better in The Gambia are not strictly monitored from outside but within. They are less frequented by government officials, either from the Regional Education Offices or Headquarters. The implication is that it may be much better to focus on establishing the schools’ internal efficiency and monitoring and supervisory measures than to impose them from afar.

140. Taking the above into consideration, **Table 21** attempts to compare the private schools and government schools based on the findings of this study and findings reported at Co-ordination Committee Meetings after school visits are conducted.

Assumptions and realities

141. It was unexpected that these schools did not have an active Parent-Teacher Association for co-ordinated discussions and approaches to school development and management. This could have provided a useful forum to jointly discuss important matters and arrive at decisions together, thus harnessing the potentials that members may possess individually.

142. That there was little importance attached to extra-curricular activities was unexpected. Although the teachers claimed to focus on attitudes, discipline and character formation, it appeared as if there was more emphasis on the academic preparation of pupils for further scholastic work.

143. The schools had no definite or structured plan for professional development. Whereas flexibility could be an advantage, the absence of a plan makes it doubtful as to whether their approach was consistent, systematised and progressive. These institutions did not seem to be change-oriented, and there appeared to be satisfaction in having children pass examinations. Therefore, there was adherence to past and traditional approaches that led to the ‘successes’ realised over the years. No doubt, one teacher wondered whether standards would not fall in view of the phasing out of the Primary School Leaving Certificate Examination – the national selection for entry to secondary school. This examination was the driving force or guiding factor for teaching in these schools. Willingly or not, the examination results were the benchmark for public assessment of all Lower Basic Schools in the country.

Table 21 Comparison of private and public schools

Private schools	Government schools
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Autonomous and regulated privately 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> State controlled and regulated publicly
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sanctions procedure: action is implemented very fast 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bureaucratic procedures: only PSC can dismiss teachers in public schools. Transfer is usually the means of disciplining defiant staff.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Motivation/Incentives: teachers can conduct classes after normal working hours. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Teachers are not allowed to conduct private classes in the school premises; Working conditions, accommodation problems, social environment, postings and other forms of frustrations may de-motivate teachers.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Conducive learning and working environment in the Greater Banjul Area. Teachers choose where they want to teach 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Teachers may not have a choice and could be posted upcountry; for instance, in remote areas.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Administrative support on educational/professional matters is given; Head can choose staff. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Some Heads do not have the experience or the qualifications to provide professional and academic support or guidance. Heads have little say, if any, over whom they work with.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> On-going professional development 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Some schools do not have a staff development programme.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Accountability: Parents and proprietor/proprietress hold teachers accountable for the students' performance. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The community/parents, especially in remote communities, cannot monitor teaching-learning processes and outputs.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Home-school link is strong: family support for pupils is significant. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Illiterate and poor parents cannot help children at home or complement school efforts.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Childrens' have a voice and are central 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Children are hardly consulted, except when investigations are mounted for specific reasons.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Proprietor's interference is crucial and decisive 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The community does not wield authority to intervene on the spot.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Discipline and high expectations for staff and pupils 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Poor performance over time tends to lead to resignation or indifference; therefore, expectations could be low.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sense of community: teacher-parent, and teacher-pupil relationships lead to building a 'learning community' for all within the school regardless of status. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Integration is prioritised; the 'basic cycle concept' is not comprehended and transformed into action in some schools; and schools in remote areas cannot build partnerships and a sense of community with other schools, except when initiated from outside as in clusters established for workshops.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Technology may be used in the learning process. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Electricity and resource constraints make it impossible/difficult to use modern technological learning equipment.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Records are up-to-date and used in the teaching-learning situation. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Apathy and disregard for records abound. Schemes of work and registers are sometimes not well kept.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Multiple and flexible teaching approaches are employed. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The 'chalk-and-talk' method – teachers as repositories of knowledge – predominates.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Teacher attitude, confidence and sense of pride are positive. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Teacher attitude sometimes leaves much to be desired; confidence and sense of pride are undermined.

144. It seems from this study that teachers tend to derive more job satisfaction in the private schools due to the environment, the resources, school conditions, the type of students admitted therein and their public image. Close supervision, accountability and high expectations equally appear as factors or elements that bolster student and teacher performance. In effect, there is no room for complacency.

145. Importantly, the study does not corroborate the notion that in African schools, family background does not constitute a significant factor in student performance or school effectiveness. The family backgrounds, inputs and support from the pupils' homes seem to contribute significantly. One of the respondents revealed this when she said that those who came from families where English was spoken performed better in essay and letter writing than the rest. Interestingly, though, she added that such children came from Mandinka families.

5.3.3. Conclusion

146. It is debatable as to whether these private schools can be rated as more effective than the government schools that serve under-privileged families, yet manage to make an impact on the lives of their students. In other words, if value added by these schools were taken into consideration against the significance of what the pupils learn from outside the schools, then it would be revealing to discover which of the two sectors – private or public – is relatively more effective. As **Farrel** explains,

... it is the "value added" to learning by school-related factors that school effectiveness properly refers, to that proportion of learning gains that can reasonably be attributed to the schooling process itself (1989, pp. 29-30)

147. **Davies and Harber** (1997) also point out that:

A good school may be found to have high expectations of its students; but those high expectations may be the result of having a 'good' intake over a number of years that are likely to produce commendable results – as in a selective or elite school (p. 29)

148. Since they are better organised, and test scores determine performance in spite of all the possible contributory factors from without, evidence suggests that private schools seem more effective as regards academic performance. This statement is cautiously made, noting that:

149. The first decision to be made in effectiveness research is the outcome on which schools will be measured and compared. The selection is not a neutral activity. A tendency to choose the 'measurable' leads to a focus on examination and test results; the implication of this is that the school's main task is to get as many children through examinations as possible (Davies and Harber, p. 27).

150. Arguably, it would require a study to delve into the long-term effects of the schools in other areas including the pupils to become active, successful and 'good citizens'.

5.3.4. Recommendations

151. Finally, the following recommendations are forwarded, particularly for policy makers and managers:

- Teachers constitute a significant variable in the learning process and effectiveness of schools. Quality teaching therefore depends on the quality of teachers in terms of training, commitment, attitude, sincerity, and academic standing. The recruitment process, teacher education, promotion and professional development should not be taken for granted in public schools but addressed by policy makers.
- Inputs for external monitoring and supervision may not be as effective as internal efficiency and quality assurance measures instituted within each school. Incentives, job satisfaction and improved working conditions can increase teacher motivation and correspondingly increase output and improve performance.
- School policies should be made flexible to allow Heads to experiment and implement their educational beliefs and ideas. School leaders must be educators by orientation that can provide guidance, strong leadership and maintain a clear sense of direction amid unity of purpose for all staff.
- Communities and parents need to be brought closer to the schools to provide support, supplement school efforts and help to hold teachers accountable.
- Basic requirements that make schools safe, attractive, functional and fascinating should be provided, and pupils encouraged to learn with or without teacher support.
- School Heads should be assisted to identify the factors and characteristics associated with effective schools and to ultimately assess themselves systemically over time for improvement purposes. In this regard, assessment should provide information on how effective the schools are and ratings made along such lines.

5.4. School head teachers

152. The purpose of the school head teacher interview was to assess the management styles in the two private schools with a view to finding out those school effectiveness factors present in these private schools to warrant such high achievement. As was highlighted in the literature review, the head teacher of a school sets the tone of the school and may be solely accountable for what is seen as the success or failure of the school. (Pamela et. al (1992)

153. Two head teachers participated in the study. One of them is a graduate teacher with 18 years experience and the other is a qualified teacher with 32 years teaching experience. They are all Gambians. Both have experience teaching in government schools and one of them in a mission school. One of the head teachers is in charge of the lower basic, upper basic and the senior secondary and is assisted by two deputies in the school. The other is in charge of only the lower basic.

154. The interview questions focused on the following school factors, which will be used to discuss the findings.

- School Choice
- Resource/Incentive
- Teaching and learning
- Time on Task
- Teaching Methods
- Management Support and Supervision
- PTA/Community Link

5.4.1. Findings and analysis

School choice

155. The choice of school of the respondents was largely determined by the fact that they gain more satisfaction in teaching in private schools. There are less managerial problems in terms of resources, teachers and pupils in general. However their perceptions varied. According to one of them teaching in a Government school could be constrained by lack of resources and large class size but this could be alleviated if a head teacher is resourceful. The other however feels that children are the same in all schools and the difference lies in the managerial skills of the head teacher in running the School. It also came out clearly that the participation of parents in school activities aids effective teaching and learning and school improvement in general as one of the head teacher explained:

156. “In the Government school I was heading, the pupils in my school came out both 1st and 2nd positions in a test organised by this very school and my school then. This performance was repeated in the National common entrance that year in which pupils in my school also came 1st and 2nd respectively”.

Resources/incentives

157. The head teachers’ salaries are a little better but according to them the difference is not significant. However, there was emphasis by one of the heads on the incentives they are receiving such as loan schemes with no added interest. They do not participate in the extra tuition given by teachers in the afternoon which pupils pay fees for.

158. Both heads stated that the private schools have more resources than both the government and mission schools they have taught in before. The proprietors order the books and sell them to the pupils. Here parents are willing to purchase all the necessary materials and even the supplementary ones. It is evident from the discussions that the heads expressed real satisfaction at the resources provided. One of them explained:

“The good thing about this school is we have the books, papers, felt pens, toilet roll and every thing we need. Books are available for sale at the schools book shop and these are imported by the proprietor and parents are all co operative in buying them”

159. The availability of a library or shelves in the head teachers’ office where reading books and the reference materials were kept for pupils and teachers use was seen by both heads as an aid to teaching and learning. One of the schools has a library situated

in the senior school which teachers can use, whilst in both schools the head teacher's office is equipped with books kept in shelves as a substitute for a library.

. “ *We don't have a library but we have shelves which pupils and teachers can use and there are lots of materials to aid teaching and learning*”

5.4.2. Learning and teaching

160. An outstanding feature in both schools is that lesson preparation is given prominent attention. Teachers are monitored by the heads, assisted by the senior teachers, to ensure that this is happening. In one of the schools the head is assisted by two deputy heads whose roles are just to monitor the work of teachers and to do administrative and managerial tasks. This is in addition to the monitoring of the senior teachers, which is a feature in both schools. One of the heads explained:

“This term, I checked on their lesson notes twice. I also called for pupils' workbooks and checked on work frequency, corrections, neatness and accuracy. I also went into classes to observe and to help.”

161. This demonstrates that there is constant monitoring and supervision in these schools. This is a feature that is lacking in most government schools. Inspection report SQAD (2000) indicates that in most government schools inspected, senior teachers, deputy heads and the head teachers do not monitor work of teachers in their schools.

Time on task

162. School hours are the same in these schools as in government schools. The only difference is they do not operate double shift. Another outstanding feature is that pupils in each of the two private schools are engaged in study classes for at least two hours every day and this is done in the schools with the supervision of the class teachers who receive incentives from the schools and the parents. This is lacking in most government schools although it is present in some mission schools.

Teaching methods

163. The head teacher of both schools confirmed that teachers used different teaching strategies as the need arises. In one of the schools the pupils are screened according to ability and differentiation is the key to the success in the school. Pupils are given individual attention and the progress of the bright ones is not delayed. This is supported by Wringe (1989) who emphasised that there is sense in the suggestion that the moment of readiness should be exploited to the full and that if this is the point at which pupils become capable of coping with a wider range of materials, and are enthusiastic to do so, the opportunity should not be missed. This is not happening in Government schools. The large class sizes are a barrier for teachers to apply differentiation. Maybe, there is the need to look at the large class size of some of these schools. As one head teacher puts it,

“Here pupils are screened according to ability. This allows the teacher to push ahead and not delay the good ones. When I was at a Government school, I practised the same.”

164. In the same vein the other head teacher feels that pupils who are slow learners should be kept behind to catch up before being promoted and this is the practice in her school.

165. Pupils are assessed through tests, and exams. There is good frequency of work in both schools. In one of the schools, the head teacher called for the books of the pupils to check on the work done. This is in addition to the checking done by the senior teachers. In the other school, the head teacher had two deputies who checked on the work together with the senior teachers. Records of pupil's progress are kept and teacher's attention is called to address weak cases.

5.4.3. Management support and supervision

166. A feature that came out clearly in the study is that there is constant monitoring going on in the private schools. Heads are very vigilant and teachers are aware of this and do not take any chance to compromise quality. This is absent in government schools as stated by one of the heads.

“I had to sack three of my teachers because they were not delivering. One of them was always absent and giving excuses while the other two were not doing any meaningful work in class with the children.”

167. This shows that heads in private schools know what is happening in every class and can assess their teachers in terms of quality delivery. Is this happening in the Mission and Government Schools? Another interesting thing is they have the mandate to Sack teachers not performing. Do Government and mission schools have to look at the mandate of the head teachers?

168. Both heads hold key positions in the management of their schools. They are the Principal advisors of the Boards of the schools.

169. At school level, there are shared responsibilities and each teacher has a stake in the administration of the school and roles are spelt out

“Yes we all play different roles. I have my responsibility and other teachers has theirs”

“Yes in a big way. I advise the Board and the school committee. My deputy and other teachers help me in managing the school.”

170. Wilby (1988) emphasised that lack of delegation in schools especially by senior managers, affects the administration role in a school. Here one can argue that in these private schools the responsibilities given to teachers are an effectiveness factor.

171. In the same vein, Paisey (1992, p4) clearly states that “No head can exercise leadership without delegating most of his responsibilities”.

PTA/community link

172. It came out clearly from both schools that although teachers might be held responsible for what goes on in the classrooms yet parents do not have the mandate to hold any teacher responsible for the poor performance of their kids. They equally have a stake in their children's performances according to the views of both heads. The following statement by one of the heads explains it further.

“They are conscious that we are the professionals. They are invited to the school every term and at open day. They are free to visit classes any time and talk to teachers. We have an open door policy and parents are free to visit the school any time and give us suggestions“

5.4.4. Head teachers’ perceptions

173. Since the head teachers views are going to play a key role in the findings of the study, it is important that their perceptions of an” effective head teacher” and an” effective school” be sought. This has some advantages, as it will add more weight to the findings. According to them, an effective head teacher is one that:

- Supervises,
- Monitors,
- Gives advice,
- Gives teachers enough freedom to exercise their initiatives in their role,
- Aims at achieving good quality academic performance.

174. The following came out as factors for an effective school:

- Availability of resources
- Conducive environment,
- Good teaching and learning,
- Good community links,
- Disciplines students
- Dedicated and hardworking teachers.

175. All the above mentioned factors are school effectiveness factors and if the views of both heads are geared towards these factors, one might deduce that these heads are running their schools towards these lines.

176. Another comment that came out was that one of the heads feels that the Department of State for Education should be helping private schools in terms of accommodation. Also one lamented that Private schools should be free to offer other examinations in addition to what is in the National curriculum. As pupils should not be limited to just what is in The Gambia, as they will be faced with challenges of the outside world.

5.4.5. Discussion

177. The head teacher sets the tone of the school and may be solely accountable for what is seen as the success or failure of the school (Pamela et al 1992). This implies that good management in a school is a factor for school effectiveness. The school factors present in the two schools could be termed effectiveness factors.

178. An outstanding feature in both schools is that most of the resources from the private schools are generated from within, through school fees and other charges. A small

percentage also comes from other sources such as NGOs and Mission support. In both schools the administration provides all the necessary resources and according to them the schools are well resourced.

179. It came out clearly from the study that private schools are well resourced and the administrations go all out to provide teachers with resources needed for teaching and learning. This was evident in the resources available in classes observed by the researcher. This is a missing factor in most government and some mission schools where resources are limited and, where they are available, under utilised. This came out clearly in the MLA report.

180. In both schools, teachers found not performing as expected were given one-month notice and sacked. There is no compromise for quality delivery in the two schools. Teachers are held responsible and taken to task for poor performance of pupils and this is done through checking of pupils and or observing lessons by the heads. Head teachers in Government schools do not have the mandate to sack any teacher. They can report teachers not performing but their powers are limited to only reporting.

181. Staff development is a prominent feature in both schools although there was no evidence of a written staff development plan. However, there was evidence that both schools organised staff development workshops at least once a term. The main objective according to the head teacher is to train teachers and to upgrade their standards. In addition to these training, the schools also participate in all in-service training programmes. This is an indication that teachers in the private schools are receiving constant training on methodology. Automatically, this means that teachers of the private schools are exposed to more In Service training than those in the Government schools.

182. Unlike government and mission schools, the private schools in the study do not operate double shift and as a result they gain 30 minutes extra which double shift schools lose due to the change over from one shift to another. This amounts to many hours a week and a year. Pupil /teacher contact time is more in the private schools and one can argue that it has a positive effect on quality. Taking into consideration that some government schools, especially the Class C Schools (schools over 3 000 plus pupils) operate double shift, it is obvious that the contact hours in these schools are less and this will definitely impact on teaching and learning. In some mission schools where this is practised, the difference is met by asking the pupils to come to school on Saturdays. The teacher factor in terms of productivity is worth mentioning. Taking into consideration that in the Government and the mission schools the teachers running these classes teach from 8 to 6.30, one can question the effectiveness of their output. There is no doubt that this is definitely a long day for any teacher practising this especially in Government schools where class sizes are large.

183. The issues that both head teachers lamented upon were the *laissez faire* attitude and lack of commitment by some teachers especially in the government schools. Both feel head teacher in government schools should be given the mandate to be employing and dismissing teachers. In this way they felt they would be in full control of what is happening in their schools, which will have an impact on quality.

5.4.6. Assumptions and realities

184. One would have assumed that a factor that would have attracted teachers in the private school was the high salary of teachers. The study proved that teachers are more concerned with job satisfaction than with salary level. Therefore this study confirmed that a conducive learning environment is a factor for high teacher performance.

185. There is no written mission statement in both schools. The Vision of both schools is to educate pupils to be able to fit in society. With the aim of developing the child academically, socially, morally, and physically, however what is certain from this study is that the academic development is given more weight. Unlike government and mission schools where mass promotion of pupils is practiced, here pupils are only promoted on merit. In the same vein outstanding pupils are also not delayed. They are promoted.

186. Good discipline is high on the agenda of the schools. Both schools have set rules and regulations, which pupils are to abide by. These are included in the package given to pupils on enrolment. The perception of both heads is that without discipline no meaningful teaching and learning will take place. The school administration designed the school rules and the parents endorsed it; though the school committees. There is therefore no resistance from the parents.

187. One of the schools has an ambitious development plan, although it is not written; but the other school's development plan is limited to only staff development. An interesting aspect of one of the school's plan is that it involved parents. This means that the school is working closely with the parents although both heads lamented that there is no active PTA in their schools. The notion of the presence of an active PTA in most Gambian schools is to help them in fund raising or other social activities.

188. Quality is high on the schools' agenda. The study revealed that teachers prepare before actually facing the classes to teach. They prepare daily lesson notes in one school and in the other daily record. These are checked by the administration. There is also Continuous Assessment of the pupils' work by the teachers at class level and externally by the senior teachers and the head teachers. Exam results are high on the schools' agenda.

189. An interesting finding is that heads in private schools have the mandate to sack teachers that are not performing or failing in their tasks.

5.4.7. Conclusion

190. It is interesting to take into account that this study has established the fact that most of the school effectiveness factors mentioned in the literature are present in the private schools. However, one can argue that some of these factors contribute to the high performance in these schools, but it is obvious that the underlying principle is the good management skills of the head teachers.

5.4.8. Recommendations

191. Taking into consideration that the head teacher's managerial skills make a difference in the performance of the school, it is recommended that head teachers be trained on management before assuming duties, and those in managerial positions without any training be subjected to one.

192. The study has indicated that the availability of resources aids school performance and, possibly, improvement. It is recommended that Government schools be provided with enough teaching and learning materials, especially textbooks and supplementary books.

193. It is important that teachers in Government schools sign a working contract with the head teacher and the head teacher be given the mandate to have the powers to

recommend the dismissal of any teacher not performing as required. This will make teachers in government schools more committed to their work.

194. The issue of Monitoring and supervision is not taken seriously in government schools. This has been stated in many inspection reports and inspectors have even issued forms to schools to senior teachers for monitoring purpose.

5.5. Pupils

5.5.1. Introduction

195. Fourteen pupils, (seven males and seven females) participated in this study, and the questions they answered were intended to obtain information on their background, availability of resources in their school, learning and teaching; and general reflections. All the interviews were structured and conducted individually in one selected private school in the Greater Banjul Area.

196. Of the fourteen respondents, four were from grade one, four from grade two, two from grade four, two from grade five and two from grade six. Their parents are mainly businessmen, managing directors, secretaries, civil servants, company employees; only one parent works overseas. It could be inferred that the pupils come from family backgrounds with a high socio-economic status.

5.5.2. Attitudes towards schooling

197. If pupils have more things they like about their school, they are more likely to be attending school regularly. This section assessed their attitude towards their school and how it can influence their learning achievement.

Pupils' likes and dislikes

198. All pupils stated that they like their school because both teachers and pupils are hardworking, their teachers teach them well and the pupils perform well in selective examinations (PSLCE).

199. Most pupils however, stated that they dislike deteriorating classrooms, student indiscipline of all forms and corporal punishment by some teachers.

200. These findings are consistent with those of the MLA study (DOSE 2000). Pupils in private schools like good and hardworking teachers and pupils. However, they dislike pupil's indiscipline of all sorts as similarly shown in the MLA study. The MLA study indicated that children do not like fighting, bullying, corporal punishment.

Pupils' preoccupation in the absence of a teacher

201. All the pupils stated that they work on their own, have lessons with "floating" supply teachers or are supervised by a neighbour class teacher. This suggests that there is close supervision of pupils in private schools and classes are monitored and pupils' learning is not disrupted.

5.5.3. Resources/school conditions

202. Overall the pupils expressed satisfaction at the resources provided by the school. All the pupils stated that exercise books, textbooks, pencils, etc are provided by the school and that the textbooks are bought at the cost of D300.00 – D400.00. All the

pupils indicated that the learning materials provided have been useful. These findings are in contrast with the findings of the MLA study on Mission and Government schools, where 50 % of the pupils do not have additional textbooks for the core subjects.

Learning materials

203. All the pupils stated that exercise books, textbooks, mathematical sets, pencils, etc are provided by parents. They spend their resources to buy the learning materials considered useful.

Availability of school library

204. All the pupils stated that their school has no library but that there is a collection of supplementary readers kept in the head teachers' offices.

205. Pupils indicated that it would be nice to have a library. A feature that came out is that, Private schools are more resourced than Government and Mission schools where, as stated above, more than 50 % of the pupils did not have any additional textbooks at all (MLA, 2000).

5.5.4. Teaching and learning

Provision of extra tuition

206. All the pupils stated that teachers provide extra tuition after school (both school and private tuition). They all indicated that their parents always pay for the cost of tuition (remedial teaching, homework and new areas of work).

Pupils' perception of their teachers

207. The pupils' general perception of their teachers indicates that teachers are good, helpful and patient to them at school.

Pupils' perception of their Head teacher

208. All the pupils indicated that their head teacher is very good, kind and encourages them at school. One pupil has indicated that the head teacher is excellent. It came out clearly that the pupils' learning environment in Private schools is more conducive than in Government and Mission schools.

5.5.5. Governance and management

209. All the pupils view a good school as a place where proper learning takes place, where teachers teach well and where pupils are helped and encouraged to learn. This is in contrast to Government and Mission schools where 43.6 % of the pupils like school because they have friends in the school, whilst only 35 % of them do so because they perceive the school to be good (MLA 2000).

210. All the pupils stated that their parents are interested in the affairs of the school and that the majority of parents attend PTA meetings. Most pupils indicated their dislike for the act of fighting after school. One pupil indicated the need to eat well in order for him to be able to learn well.

5.5.6. Discussion

211. Pupils feature in school effectiveness and school improvement research as an important variable. Their characteristic and predisposition towards learning tasks can be assumed to influence their learning achievement (MLA 2000). Therefore their views on schooling must not be taken for granted. The respondents in this study are lower basic school pupils of a private institution. Findings from previous studies have been corroborated and discussed.

212. Of the factors that contribute to pupils' performance in the private schools that participated in the study, the following stand out as discussed.

213. The pupils come from families of relatively high socio-economic status and live in the urban area (Greater Banjul Area). Pupils of such socio-economic status tend to perform better than their colleagues in Government and Mission schools. Thus the private schools' performance, as seen in the MLA study, corroborates the findings of the NAT (2002).

214. The attitude of pupils towards their schooling was also investigated. All pupils like their school because they are of the view that both teachers and pupils are hardworking; teachers teach well and pupils perform well in examinations. This is not surprising given the pupils' positive attitude to school and their unflinching dislike for all forms of student indiscipline and corporal punishment. The level of teacher supervision and the pupils' preoccupation in the absence of a teacher are a source of motivation and consequently have implication for performance. Expectations are undoubtedly high for pupils, probably much higher than in Government and Mission schools.

215. The adequacy of instructional materials (for example, exercise books, textbooks, pencils, etc.) provided by the school and parents make learning conditions comparatively better than those in Government and Mission schools. A feature that comes out is that private schools are more resourced than other types of schools in The Gambia.

216. The provision of extra school and private tuition to pupils paid by parents is a source of motivation, and pupils tend to develop a sense of confidence and high self esteem. Their perception of their teachers and head teacher suggests their learning environment is relatively more conducive than in Government and Mission schools.

217. Pupils' perception of a good school and general comments about their school were analysed. All the pupils are of the view that a good school is a place where effective learning takes place and where pupils are helped and encouraged to learn. They also think that a good school should have a 'nice' and beautiful environment.

218. All the pupils stated that their parents are interested in the affairs of the school and that the majority of parents attend PTA meetings. The school has an active Parent Teacher Association for co-ordinated discussions and approaches to school development and management.

5.5.7. Conclusion

219. It seems from this study that pupils' performance in the private schools are influenced by factors such as the school environment, the resources, school conditions, type of pupils, close supervision, accountability, high expectations and public image. The family backgrounds, inputs and support from the pupils' homes seem to contribute significantly as well.

5.5.8. Recommendations

220. Based on the foregoing analysis and discussion, the following recommendations are made for possible improvement on pupils' performance in The Gambia.

- An adequate number of qualified teachers should be provided for each school irrespective of its location. These teachers should be motivated to give their best.
- New policies to attract and retain qualified teachers should be initiated.
- Education authorities (DOSE) should ensure that the school effectiveness factors identified in Private schools should be adopted by the other types of schools.

5.6. Parents

5.6.1. Introduction

221. Twelve parents from two identified private schools in the Greater Banjul Area were group interviewed in two separate groups of six each. The aim of the structured interview was to elicit parents' views on school effectiveness issues and their participation in school. The respondents' ages and background in both school groups varied as indicated in Table 22 below:

Table 22 Ages and occupations

SCHOOL A		SCHOOL B	
Age	Occupation	Age	Occupation
55	Businessman	43	Programme manager
40	Clerk	48	Secretary
34	Clerk	39	Carpenter
55	Engineer	38	Businesswoman
37	Housewife	46	Secretary
38	Manager	32	Retired Teacher

5.6.2. Findings and discussion

Choice of school

222. The study reveals that the parents' choice of a private school is influenced by a host of factors such as:

- Good passes in National exam results
- Proximity to house
- Lack of a double shift system
- Teacher status, experience and commitment

- Positive teacher attitude regarding teaching and learning
- School's concern for appropriate pupil behaviour

223. About 50 % of the parents interviewed believe that there are better teachers in private schools and, as a result, children perform better in private schools than in public schools. About 68 % of parents' choices are influenced by the fact that these schools do not practise the double shift system and, unlike the government schools, teachers are not overloaded with too many lessons and a long day which ends at 6.30pm. .

224. When probed further about the double shift, respondents expressed resentment such as

“Teachers are human beings, when they are tired their performance is affected and as a result teaching and learning are negatively affected.”

225. Another parent said,

“We do not want our children to be victims of the double shift”.

5.6.3. Resources

226. Effective parental contribution to children's school work is a factor for improved student performance. However, this did not surface in the parents' interview but it came out clearly from both the teachers' and the head teachers' interviews. Of the twelve parents, none made mention of their role in enhancing the quality of education of their children but they believe that quality in school is enhanced when the following are present in a school setting.

- “Good calibre” of teachers
- Availability of teaching and learning materials
- Availability of supplementary materials
- Teachers interested in and committed to effective teaching and learning.

5.6.4. School leadership/management and PTA

227. Regarding school Leadership/Management, the views of parents in both schools are that head teachers are open, committed and understanding. They exercise a lot of patience and monitor the work of teachers and pupils. .

228. Conflicting views surfaced from the PTA of both schools. This was demonstrated by comments such as:

“I never come for meetings”

“I am never invited”

“The PTA is supportive and ensures decisions taken at meetings are implemented”

“The PTA needs to be reactivated”

229. As stated in the literature review, parental involvement is one of the facilitating conditions for school effectiveness. Analysis of the responses indicates parents' conflicting views regarding the status of the PTA and its activities in the two private schools. These triggered questions such as: "Is the PTA functional as a body?" or "Is the school working with only few parents?"

230. However, follow-up interviews were not conducted. This notwithstanding, some parents expressed the following views:

"Well we do meet sometimes, what is evident is that some parents are not aware of PTA meetings and as a result rate it as not functional."

5.6.5. Contribution to the school

231. Parents' contributions to schools are significant and two-fold. They are "within the school" and "outside the school", and both contributions come in the form of moral and financial support. "Within the school" contribution is through paying school and study fees, buying instructional materials, supplementary reading books and pencils, providing school lunches and participating in 'bring and buy sales'. All of these are basic inputs for school effectiveness.

232. Respondents considered in this study are of the view that parents' financial contribution improves the school's financial situation and, consequently, contributes to school effectiveness.

5.6.6. Supervision

233. The work that parents do with the school to supervise the child in the learning process is vital. Parental help outside the school is usually directed to helping the child learn. This study reveals that assistance regarding clarification on home assignments in the form of explaining concepts and making comments on assigned work is given to children by parents on request. Other assistance is rendered in the form of providing a hired study teacher as some parents do not have time and believe that hiring a study teacher impacts on performance and helps in producing excellent results

234. This study further reveals that other inhibiting factors such as household chores, high responsibilities at work and inability to assist (i.e. not being conversant with schoolwork) prevent parents from assisting their children in the home.

235. This indicates that some of the parents in this sample give priority to doing household chores and fulfilling their job responsibilities over assisting children with assign school work at home.

236. Respondents attach a lot of importance to teacher and parent meetings. They are of the opinion that in managing child welfare and monitoring child performance and behaviour, giving feedback by both the school and the parent can be very valuable.

237. However, parents accepted the fact that due to their busy schedules, they hardly visit schools and, in most cases, the link between individual parents and the school is missing.

5.6.7. Child's time after school

238. Children are engaged in numerous activities after school. Parents believe that these activities broaden thinking, develop skills, improve physical health and instil fear of God and self-discipline in children. After school engagements mentioned are “studies, household chores, “Dara” (koranic school), playing with siblings or friends, and watching television..

5.6.8. Assumptions and realities

239. According to the parents, children view these private schools as good schools in the sense that there is effective teaching and learning. Children assume that discussions and competition for the best class among teachers and pupils, and also class performance and good results in national exams, are the realities on which they base their assumptions.

240. Parents' view of a good school is based on the assumption of their concept of a good school. A good school, according to them, is one with:

- Established and implemented rules and regulations approved by both the school and the parents.
- Well-motivated, committed and dedicated teachers.
- Discipline and high performing students.
- Strong communication links with parents and their views and suggestions valued by the school administration.

241. Parents however have reservation regarding two issues in these two private schools: school fees and provision of scholarships. Regarding school fees, parents lamented that this is on the increase every year and suggested that government should introduce a control mechanism in private schools.

242. With regard to scholarship, parents lamented the fact that children in private schools need scholarships just as those in public schools. Parents with more than one child in the school struggle to pay school fees. The reality is that parents made a choice regarding a public school and a private school, but in as much as the good school issue was considered, the financial implications of this choice and the number of children they could support should have been factored in the decision making.

5.6.9. Conclusion and recommendations

243. The analysis of the responses shows that the private schools in this study are grappling with issues of school effectiveness just as the public schools. It is evident that these parents do not make regular school visits, the PTAs are not very functional and the link between individual teachers and parents needs to be improved.

244. On the other hand, the study also shows that parents in these private schools provide adequate instructional materials, school lunches and participate fully in fund raising activities. The question one may ask is “Are these factors responsible for the significant differences in performance ? or are the home background and experiences of the children contributing factors to the effectiveness of these schools?” One can conclude that it is a combination of both and, as a result, the following recommendations are being made:

- The issue of school-parent link should be adequately addressed. Sensitisation programmes should be embarked on to bridge the gap.
- Helping the child learn at home is not highly prioritised by parents. Schools should embark on working with the PTA to strengthen this link.

6. CONCLUSION

245. Improving the quality of education in general and basic education in particular is a primary pre-occupation of The Gambia Education Policy 1988- 2003. In that connection, between 1997 and 2000, the Monitoring of Learning Achievements (MLA) survey was conducted to assess children's learning achievements and conditions that affect teaching and learning in schools. There were interesting revelations from the study, one of which was the disparity between performance of children in the different school types – Government, Mission and Private schools. Private schools consistently perform better than Government and Mission schools. The present study is intended to make a re-analysis of the original MLA data, conduct a literature review and case studies in order to learn lessons from the Private schools. It must be underscored that the findings of this study are not conclusive by themselves, but are intended to shed more light on the findings of the MLA. Findings on the quantitative study are based on data collection in 1999 during the MLA survey whilst that of the qualitative data is based on data collected during the study. However, for the fact that both studies happened within the same education policy period, and there has not been any significant policy or operational shift, it is therefore reasonable to use both data sets concurrently to find explanations for school conditions.

246. The fundamental question which this study seeks to answer is why Private schools consistently performed better than Government and Mission schools during the MLA (2000) survey and similar national assessments. The findings suggest that the following lend themselves better in explaining the disparity in performance:

- School management style
- Availability of basic teaching and learning resources
- Quality of monitoring and supervision
- Professional support provided for teachers

6.1. School management

247. From the findings of the study, it is very clear that there is more shared responsibility in the Private schools than other school types. This has reflected a great deal of stake being held by key partners in education service delivery. Conversely, heads of Government and Mission schools place less premium on providing responsibility to all stakeholders, the effect of which could deter the enhancement of effective and efficient service delivery. It is therefore evident that leadership support in schools is an important tenet in the realisation of quality education.

6.2. Basic teaching and learning materials

248. The findings suggest that there is a high level of inadequacy of basic teaching and learning materials, such as chalk, syllabuses, pupils' books and teachers' guides in Government and Mission schools when compared to Private schools. This, to some extent has explained the good performance of Private schools.

6.3. Monitoring and supervision

249. During the follow-up study it was observed that Private schools have more effective monitoring and supervision systems. Frequency of monitoring and supervision was also higher. Time on task for both students and teachers also seems to be higher for the Private schools.

6.4. Professional support

250. Another factor that explains why private schools perform better is the degree of professional support provided for their teachers. Their teachers receive more support from senior and head teachers.

251. In conclusion the result of the re-analysis of the MLA data and findings of the case studies tend to support the argument that the disparity in performance of the different school types can be primarily attributed to the above mentioned factors. Differences in factors such as teacher qualifications, salaries and class sizes have not been decisive. It is therefore important that these conditions be considered from policy and practice dimensions with the view to eliminating the disparities

6.5. Recommendations

- Taking into consideration that the head teacher's managerial skills makes a difference in the performance of the school, it is recommended that head teachers be trained on management before assuming duties and those in managerial positions without any training be subjected to one.
- The study has indicated that the availability of resources aids school improvement. It is therefore recommended that Government schools be provided with enough teaching and learning materials, especially textbooks and supplementary books.
- It is important that teachers in Government schools sign a working contract with the head teachers and the head teachers be given the mandate to recommend the dismissal of any teacher not performing as required. This would make teachers in government schools more committed to their work.
- The issue of Monitoring and supervision is not taken seriously in government schools. This has been stated in many inspection reports and inspectors have even issued forms to senior teachers to guide them in their monitoring and supervisory work.
- The issue of school parent link should be adequately addressed. Sensitisation programmes should be embarked on to bridge the gap.
- Teachers constitute a significant variable in the learning process and effectiveness of schools. Quality teaching therefore depends on the quality of teachers in terms of training, commitment, attitude, sincerity and academic standing. The recruitment process, teacher education, promotion and professional development should not be taken for granted in public schools but addressed by policy makers.
- Inputs for external monitoring and supervision may not be as effective as internal efficiency and quality assurance measures instituted within each school. Incentives, job satisfaction and improved working conditions can

increase teacher motivation and correspondingly increase output and improve performance.

- School policies should be made flexible to allow Heads to experiment and implement their educational beliefs and ideas. School leaders must be educators by orientation that can provide guidance, strong leadership and maintain a clear sense of direction amid unity of purpose for all staff.
- Communities and parents need to be brought closer to the schools to provide support, supplement school efforts and help to hold teachers accountable.
- Basic requirements that make schools safe, attractive, functional and fascinating should be provided, and pupils encouraged to learn with or without teacher support.
- School Heads should be assisted to identify the factors and characteristics associated with effective schools and to ultimately assess themselves systemically over time for improvement purposes. In this regard, assessment should provide information on how effective the schools are and ratings made along such lines.
- Helping the child learn at home is not rated high in the priority of parents. Schools should embark on working with the PTA to establish and strengthen this link.
- Education authorities (DOSE) should ensure that the school effectiveness factors identified in Private schools are adopted by both the government and mission schools.
- The preparation of lessons before teaching should be emphasised and seen to be very important. The goals and objective(s) of the course work and single lessons should set the tone for the teaching and learning process.
- The availability of teaching and learning resources, which is an important factor in the delivery of the curriculum, should be given a higher priority. The DOSE should ensure this by increasing the budgetary allocation for public schools.
- Child centred and democratic approaches to learning should be encouraged. The pupils perform, understand and apply what they have learnt better when they take charge of their own learning. Teaching includes discussions, group work, project work etc.
- The 880 hours pupil contact time which is recommended, but which is yet to be achieved, should be closely looked into. The afternoon classes in Government schools should be thoroughly supervised by the school administration to ensure value for money.
- Self-discipline and orderliness should be emphasised. The culture and ethos of our education institutions should be characterised and shaped by a policy addressing school discipline and codes of conduct.
- The upward mobility of teachers in terms of promotion should take cognisance of their ability to develop self-discipline in the pupils.
- They should also be able to put in place a school discipline policy and measures to create an orderly learning environment, which the learners themselves cherish and have a sense of ownership of. There should also be recognition of work well done and on the other hand sanctions for defiance.

7. ANNEXES

Annex 1: Details of private schools visited

Annex 2: Classroom observation form

Annex 1: Details of private schools visited

SCHOOL	GRADE LEVEL OBSERVED	SUBJECT	DURATION
J. C. Faye Memorial Lower Basic School SCHOOL A	Grade 4 Grade 2 Grade 5 Grade 5	Science English English Social and Environmental Studies	35 Minutes 35 Minutes 35 Minutes 35 Minutes
Ndow's Comprehensive Lower Basic School SCHOOL B	Grade 4 Grade 1 Grade 3 Grade 6	English Mathematics Mathematics English	35 Minutes 35 Minutes 35 Minutes 35 Minutes
8 Classes and 8 Lesson	Grade 1 – 1 Mathematics Grade 2 – 1 English Grade 3 – 1 Mathematics Grade 4 – 2 (1) English and (1) Science Grade 5 – 2 (1) English and (1) Social and Environmental Studies Grade 6 – 1 English		

Annex 2 : Classroom observation form

CLASSROOM OBSERVATION FORM			Name of Senior Teacher					
Name of school		Name of Teacher:						
Region	Qualified/Trainee/Unqualified							
Key:- 1 = Good, 2 = Fair, 3 = Poor.			Date					
Standards	Attitude of teacher	Keen and willing to attend						
		Interested and active in school life						
		Smart in appearance						
	How well are pupils taught	Teacher's subject knowledge						
		Planning and preparation						
		Use of various teaching styles						
		Management of pupil behaviour						
		Marking and assessment of pupils' work						
		Recording of pupils achievement						
		Setting of purposeful homework						
		Asking of relevant and challenging questions						
		Involvement of pupils in their learning						
		Organisation of the class						
		Evaluation of lessons and planning						
		Evidence	Observation of lessons					
	Scrutiny of pupils' work							
	Lesson plans							
	Discussion with pupils							
	Discussion with teachers							

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