Time to Teach

Teacher attendance and time on task
in primary schools

Mozambique

Dita Nugroho and Despina Karamperidou

July 2021

unicef | for every child

Time to Teach

Teacher attendance and time on task in primary schools in Mozambique

Dita Nugroho and Despina Karamperidou

July 2021

unicef

Office of Research – Innocenti

Acknowledgements

Foreword

We face a global learning crisis. Fifty-three per cent of children in low- and middle-income countries are 'learning poor': they cannot read and understand a simple text by the end of primary school age. In sub-Saharan Africa, this problem is even more acute, with the learning poverty rate reaching 87 per cent overall and ranging from 40 to 99 per cent across countries.

Teachers play the most vital role in any education system, imparting knowledge to students. But they are more than just conduits of information. For teachers equip children with the tools to analyse, problem solve, think creatively and use information effectively – skills necessary to lead healthy and productive lives.

Notably, countries in Eastern and Southern Africa have invested heavily in teacher development. Mozambique has made considerable efforts in addressing teacher absenteeism. Yet different forms of absences have persisted, as illustrated by an estimated teacher absenteeism rate of 29 per cent. Teachers attending lessons and spending time on task is a prerequisite for learning in school.

Teacher absenteeism and reduced time on task wastes valuable financial resources, short-changes students and is one of the most cumbersome obstacles on the path towards the Sustainable Development Goal of inclusive and quality education and to the related vision of the new UNICEF education strategy: Every Child Learns. Low teacher attendance can also cause much broader economic losses, since any hindrance to human capital development has a deteriorating impact on sustainable development across sectors.

Therefore, enhancing teachers' presence in the classroom and ensuring that class time is spent teaching, can contribute significantly to the productivity and inclusive prosperity of a country. This Time to Teach study collates and strengthens the evidence base on primary school teacher absenteeism in Mozambique. The study uses a mix of qualitative and quantitative research methods to provide critical insights into the factors that underpin the multiple forms of teacher absenteeism and time on task. It also examines how factors vary across countries, school types, gender of teacher and other teacher characteristics. Despite high levels of teacher absenteeism, the study shows that teachers are generally committed and that what is needed is education system strengthening. It is hoped that findings will inform workable solutions and policies that will ensure a motivated teaching force, increase opportunities for children to learn at school and, ultimately, improve their life and work opportunities.

The Research Team

UNICEF Innocenti

Contents

Acronyms and abbreviations

ATM	automated teller machine
DPEC	Provincial Directorate of Education and Culture (Direcção Provincial da Educação e Cultura)
FGD	focus group discussion
IDI	in-depth interview
MINEDH	Ministry of Education and Human Development (Ministério de Educação e Desenvolvimento Humano)
PTR	pupil-teacher ration
SDEJT	District Services for Education, Youth and Technology (Serviço Distrital de Educaçâo, Juventude e Tecnologia)
SDI	Service Delivery Indicators
TTT	Time to Teach
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund

Summary of findings

Study overview

Past studies have identified low teacher attendance as a significant barrier to achieving quality universal education in Mozambique. Time to Teach (TTT) is a mixed-methods project, involving interviews, focus group discussions and structured observations at 20 schools and a survey of 245 teachers.[i] For the purposes of this study, teacher absenteeism is taken to include absence from school, lack of punctuality, absence from class and reduced time on task. The data collection took place alongside the Service Delivery Indicators (SDI) study undertaken by the World Bank in 2018.[1] The SDI collected teacher absenteeism data from a representative sample of schools while the TTT focused on understanding the factors behind reported absenteeism levels.

What is the extent of teacher absence?

Our findings, based on surveyed teachers' self-reports, show that:

■ Lack of punctuality was the most commonly reported form of absence, reported by 18 per cent of teachers as something they experienced at least once a week. Teachers in urban areas were more likely to do so (42 per cent), compared to their counterparts in rural areas (7 per cent).

■ 11 per cent of teachers reported being regularly absent from school. Here, the difference between urban and rural teachers was reversed. Among rural teachers, 29 per cent reported being absent from school regularly, compared to only 4 per cent of urban teachers.

■ When they were already present at school, 9 per cent of teachers reported that they were regularly absent from the classroom. Again, teachers in rural areas were more likely to experience regular classroom absences (16 per cent) compared to those in urban areas (6 per cent).

■ Finally, 11 per cent of teachers with valid responses reported regularly spending less time teaching in the classroom than scheduled. This figure should be reported with caution due to a high proportion of missing values.

Compared to these figures, studies based on observers' reports returned higher incidences of absence. The SDI study reported that 28 per cent of teachers were absent from school during their visits, a reduction from 45 per cent in 2014. A further 1 per cent were absent from class, also reduced from 11 per cent in the earlier study. TTT Mozambique findings suggest that existing initiatives to address absenteeism, particularly access to financial services, construction of teacher housing in rural area, and civil service employment conditions, have mitigated the effects of key factors that have in the past been found to contribute to teacher absences.[2]

Teachers who were late to school or had departed early were considered as absent from school during an observation. With this in mind, the combined figures on self-reported regular school absences and lack of punctuality in the TTT were comparable to the SDI study results.[ii]

---

i   There was a purposive approach in selecting schools. The findings indicate a snapshot of the selected schools, rather than a representative view of the situation across all schools in Mozambique. A description of the study methodology can be found in the Annex.

ii   It should be noted that the TTT sample is small and not meant to be representative-Both the SDI and TTT data collection faced significant challenges. Some schools could not be visited due to a range of issues, thus affecting the measures of absenteeism. The implications of these challenges are outlined in the Annex to this report as well as the SDI report.

What factors are associated with teacher attendance?

This study identified a number of factors associated with teacher absenteeism in Mozambique. Most notably, there were stark differences in the types and reasons behind teacher absences in urban and rural areas.

■ In rural areas, teachers were more likely to nominate health, family and social responsibilities and class preparation tasks as the main reasons behind their absences. Meanwhile, in urban areas, teachers were more likely to report missing teaching time, mainly through late arrival or early departure from school, due to transportation constraints and distance from school.

■ Stronger sanctions have been built into regulations and support systems to monitor absenteeism, including provisions to sanction teachers for chronic absenteeism, deduct their salary and even dismiss them. While, according to interviewees, these sanctions have been rarely used, most could recollect recent examples of such use. While the TTT survey does not point to a clear relationship between reported frequency of inspection visits and absenteeism, interview data suggest that how inspections are carried out and followed-up has an impact.

■ Teachers reported having support for continuing education increasingly available, especially through distance learning. Although stakeholders reported that supporting continuing education contributes to increased motivation – and that this can manifest in behaviours such as increased punctuality – teacher surveys suggest that balancing work and study can be a double-edged sword – increasing absence and reducing time on task in the classroom.

■ Technology can have positive and negative effects. Interviewees reported on the increasing use of mobile platforms between and among head teachers and education officials, including for coordination and reporting. However, mobile phone use was also reported to be a considerable distraction from teaching, and responsible for reducing teachers' time-on-task in the classroom.

■ Community engagement and school leadership that encourage high levels of involvement, can play a role in the monitoring of teacher attendance and time on task. However, parents with lower educational backgrounds were less likely to feel able to participate in this way.

What are the policy implications of this study?

This study identified several priority areas to continue addressing the factors behind teacher absenteeism in Mozambique:

■ At the national policy level, include punctuality in the expectations for teacher attendance; consider motivation and professional commitment in promotion and progression decisions; introduce study leave expectations and allowance; and work with other sectors to continue supporting teachers' access to health, financial services and provision of teacher accommodation, particularly in rural areas.

■ As part of monitoring and reporting absences, continue monitoring travel time and methods of transportation to school as barriers to on-time attendance, particularly in urban areas.

■ Train school leaders in community engagements that encourage the involvement of parents from all socio-economic and educational backgrounds, including the valuing of local languages and home practices that support children's learning.

■ Review the effectiveness of school councils on teacher attendance that include community members and identify the measures to mitigate teacher's absenteeism and share best practices with other schools.

■ Support school-level management and supervision, continue increased provision of professional development for head teachers, particularly in the area of community engagement; identify bottlenecks in the provision of teaching and learning materials; and consider the introduction of policies to limit or manage teachers' use of personal technology in schools and the classroom.

Section 1: Introduction

Teacher attendance is one of the prerequisites on the path toward universal learning in developing countries. Over the past decades, however, studies from across the developing world have found national rates of teacher absenteeism that range from 3 to 27 per cent.[3] These rates often conceal even higher rates in particular areas within countries.

Figure 1: Teacher attendance in Mozambique (SDI 2014)

- 45% Absent from school
- 11% Absent from class
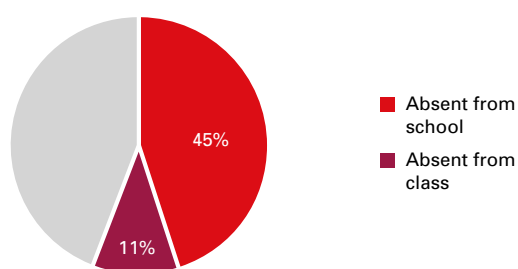
Figure 2: Teacher attendance in Mozambique (SDI 2018)

- 29% Absent from school
- 1% Absent from class
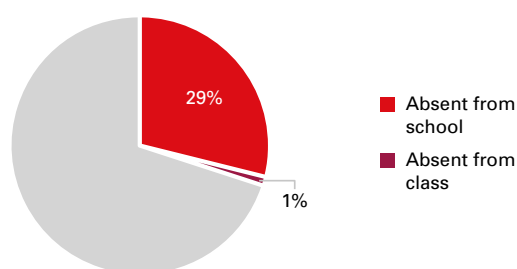
1.1. Teacher absenteeism is a significant issue in Mozambique

In Mozambique, the issue of teacher absenteeism has increasingly been gaining attention over the past decade. National administrative data in 2010 found that over 2,200 teachers were systematically absent from work.[4] This appeared to be a known issue to the public, with 22 per cent of Mozambicans reporting that they often encountered teacher absence at their local school.[5]

In 2014, the World Bank's SDI study conducted visits to schools around the country and found that 45 per cent of teachers were absent from school, the highest rate among countries visited in the region.[iii] A further 11 per cent were at school but not in class when they were meant to be teaching. In a repeat visit in 2018, undertaken at the same time period as this TTT study, the SDI survey found an increase in attendance, with 28.4 per cent of teachers absent from school and 1.3 per cent absent from class.

1.2. Policy makers in Mozambique have implemented reforms to improve attendance

According to an evaluation report from the Global Partnership on Education, the 2014 SDI survey, as well as results from Mozambique's first national learning assessments in 2013, confirmed policy makers' previously held suspicions of the seriousness of the teacher absenteeism problem in Mozambique. Coinciding with a new government's term, the Ministry of Education and Human Development (Ministério de Educação e Desenvolvimento Humano, MINEDH) responded to these findings with a nationwide campaign against teacher and student absenteeism, improvements to school supervision and management efforts and administrative sanctions for teacher absenteeism.[6]

---

iii   Compared to Kenya, Madagascar, Niger, Nigeria, Tanzania, Togo and Uganda. See http://www.sdindicators.org.

Box 1. Overview of primary teachers and teaching policies in Mozambique

Primary teachers in Mozambique

Following independence, Mozambique made great strides in expanding access to primary schooling. Over 6.5 million children enrolled were in primary schools in 2018, more than triple the number enrolled two decades earlier. Mozambique's total net enrolment rate at primary schools, at just under 94 per cent in 2018, is higher than the average for sub-Saharan Africa. Repetition and dropout rates, however, have remained high, with around one in four primary students not transitioning to secondary school.[7]

The number of primary school teachers in Mozambique has increased to meet this demand, growing from 77,000 to 119,000 in the decade to 2018 (UIS, 2020). Although the average pupil to teacher ratio (PTR) decreased in the same period nationally, ten districts still had a PTR of over 80 in 2016 (Universalia, 2019). In 2017, the PTR and number of new primary school teachers hired met national targets, but the number of new teachers was reduced in the subsequent year's budget.[8] An increase in PTR has since been observed.[9]

Teacher training

In 2019, a three-year pre-service teacher training programme was introduced for grade 12 graduates. The previous options of a one-year and a three-year programme that required candidates only to have completed grade 10 will be phased out. This followed from a series of changes to the primary teaching training system over the years, in search of balance between the desire for ´fast track´ options to meet increasing demand and ensuring quality preparation.[10]

In-service training was considered a way of supporting the goal of quality teacher preparation, including supplementing shortcomings in the pre-training provision. School clusters (zonas de influencia pedagogica, ZIPs) were established in the 1970s to facilitate peer learning and pedagogical exchange between primary teachers in neighbouring schools. Training options are of varying lengths and in different forms, including increasingly by distance.

One study found that certified continuing education courses, which are difficult to nrol in and can be supported by bursaries but in many cases are paid for by teachers, were the most valued form of professional development. These provide direct financial benefit of moving to a higher salary category. Some teachers were interested in this option that may eventually allow them to seek other employment outside of teaching, rather than enhancing their professional practice.[11]

Teacher recruitment and employment conditions

The process of permanent teacher recruitment by MINEDH takes place annually, drawing recruits from the various teacher training institutions in the country, on the basis of projected needs by discipline and district as reported by provincial offices. Provincial Governors are also able to hire contract or temporary teachers with any qualification level to meet additional local needs not met by the civil service process.[12]

Upon employment, permanent teachers are conferred civil servant status, including associated salary and conditions. Contract teachers do not receive these benefits. According to the 2012 Worldwide Bureaucracy Indicators, in Mozambique there is a 10 per cent wage premium for public sector employment compared to formal wage employees, although the relationship is reversed among tertiary-educated employees. The public service Administrative Acts allow teachers to progress regularly, with automatic salary increases every three years and further increases in salary on completion of higher degrees. As members of the public service, teachers are also eligible for the 'career change' provision, allowing them to move on to more senior roles including school leadership, academic and government office positions.

Section 2: Understanding teacher attendance in Mozambique

Policy makers and researchers have traditionally recognized one form of teacher absenteeism: absence of the teacher from school. Accordingly, in the past two decades, numerous programmes have been implemented globally to increase teacher school attendance as a means of improving student learning.

While the Time to Teach study does not focus explicitly on learning outcomes, it relied on the assumption that in order for learning to occur, a number of minimal conditions relating to the role of teachers in the learning process need to be fulfilled. Specifically, teachers have to be in school, in the classroom and actively teaching. This has led to the development of a multi-dimensional concept for teacher absenteeism, which recognizes four forms of absence: (1) absence from school; (2) absence of punctuality (late arrival and/or early departure from school); (3) absence from the classroom (while in school); and (4) reduced time-on-task (while in the classroom). The methodology of the TTT study in Mozambique, including study challenges and limitations, is presented in the Annex.

2.1. How often are teachers absent?

The TTT survey asked teachers to report how often, since the beginning of the school year, they had : 1) been absent from school, 2) arrived late or departed early from school, 3) been absent from class and 4) spent less time teaching in the classroom than planned. They were also asked to name three main reasons that have caused them to experience each of these forms of absences.

Among those who provided a valid response, the most common form of teacher absence reported was lack of punctuality, with 18 per cent of teachers reporting that they arrived late or departed early at least once a week. The next most common occurrence was absence from school, with 15 per cent of teachers experiencing this regularly. Over 9 per cent of teachers regularly missed class even though they were at school. Finally, 11 per cent regularly experienced reduction in teaching time when they were in the classroom, although this final figure should be interpreted with caution as half of the teacher responses for this question were missing.

Teachers in rural areas were considerably more likely to report being absent from school regularly (29 per cent), compared to those in urban areas (4 per cent). This trend, however, is reversed for late arrival/early departure (*see Figure 3*). In urban areas, 42 per cent of teachers reported regularly arriving late or departing early from school, a higher proportion than among rural teachers, at 7 per cent.

There were some differences in reported absence frequency by teacher gender and education level. For example, female teachers were somewhat more likely to report being regularly absent from school and losing teaching time in the classroom than male teachers. Teachers who had not completed secondary schooling were more likely to report regular absences from school and from the classroom than those who hold a secondary school qualification.

Figure 3: Proportion of teachers reporting the following types of absences once a week or more, by location
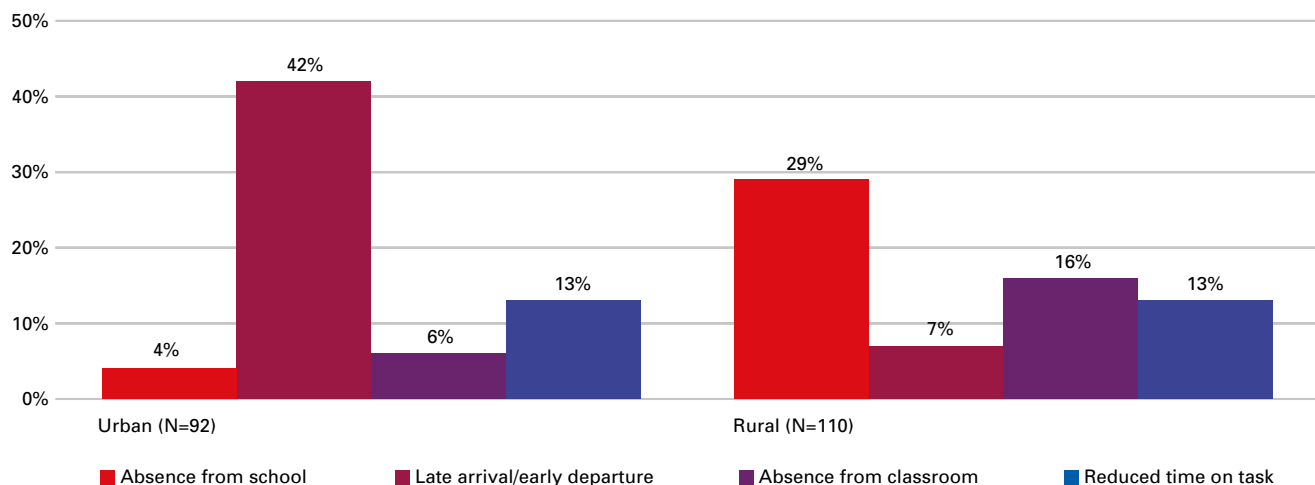
2.2. Policy makers' definitions of absenteeism

When asked about their conception of teacher absenteeism, sub-national officials offered rich definitions that for the most part captured the different forms of absenteeism defined in this study. This included full-day and part-day absences, absence from classroom and loss of teaching time in the classroom.

A district education official in Zambezia, for example, used the term, which he defined as when "the teacher goes to school and does not teach … a teacher who goes to school and is on the phone". In the provinces of Nampula, Inhambane, Gaza and Tete, officials' definitions of absenteeism also included conceptions of absence from the classroom and reduced teaching time in the classroom. Several interviewees mentioned the possibility of part-day absences. Only one sub-national official, in Manica, explicitly mentioned lack of punctuality in their definition of absenteeism.

Section 3: What factors are associated with teacher attendance?

Health issues were the most commonly reported reason for being absent from school, with three out of four teachers nominating this a main reason for absence. A higher proportion of teachers in rural areas did so than those in urban areas, as well as for female teachers compared to male teachers (*see Figure 4*). This was followed by undertaking official school business and family reasons. Nationally, teachers put forward the same reasons for arriving late or departing early from school. Notably, however, different factors dominated in urban areas where teachers reported that transportation and distance to school are among the most frequently reasons for their lack of punctuality (*see Figure 5*).

Figure 6 indicates that when they were already at school surveyed teachers reported missing class most commonly for administrative reasons (52 per cent), followed by attending to official school business (40 per cent), as shown. For teachers in rural areas, having too many class preparation tasks also play a significant role, as well as lacking required teaching materials or aids. Health was also commonly raised as a reason for being absent from class, among female teachers in particular.

Figure 7 shows that in the classroom surveyed teachers reported experiencing reduced time teaching due to health (50 per cent), followed by lack of teaching materials/aids required to teach a class (27 per cent), too many class preparation tasks (25 per cent), bad weather (19 per cent) and pupils having trouble following the class (17 per cent).

Other factors that arose in further analyses of data from the teacher surveys and interviews with stakeholders are presented here following the explanatory model presented in Section 2.

3.1. National factors associated with teacher attendance

The national policies that were raised in this study as factors in teacher attendance were those related to general public service employment conditions. Interviewees, particularly head teachers and provincial and district representatives expressed optimism around improved employment conditions that they observed to be resulting from public service regulatory reforms. The addition of overtime pay and half shift payments, timeliness of salary payments, career change provisions and recognition of a salary scale for head teachers were raised by informants as factors that have motivated teachers.

Public service employment conditions, as reported by interviewees, included administrative sanctions for chronic absences. Many interviewed sub-national representatives and head teachers spoke specifically of 'discounting' the salaries of teachers who had been warned for absences and had not changed their behaviour. These were reported to be rare but most interviewees could point to specific recent examples of these sanctions being applied. Multiple levels of stakeholders at the school, district and province levels play a part in the process. Similarities in how different interviewees spoke of salary discounting and the language they used suggested that the presence of a national basis for sanctioning such behaviour is an important enabler.

> Public service employment conditions, as reported by interviewees, included administrative sanctions for chronic absences. Many interviewed sub-national representatives and head teachers spoke specifically of 'discounting' the salary of teachers who had been warned for absences and had not changed their behaviour.

The government's initiatives to raise awareness around the issue of absenteeism, which one district official in Tete province referred to as a "call for attention speaking of absenteeism everywhere", were mentioned by some interviewees as an example of a national measure that has had an impact on attendance. Sub-national officials and head teachers referred to television and radio campaigns, circulars and ministerial visits as examples of awareness-raising activities that had been conducted around absenteeism. However, when prompted, a couple of teachers responded that they were not familiar with the campaign.

Figure 4: Top five reasons for absence from school

Health | Official school business | Family reasons | Social/community obligations | Transportation
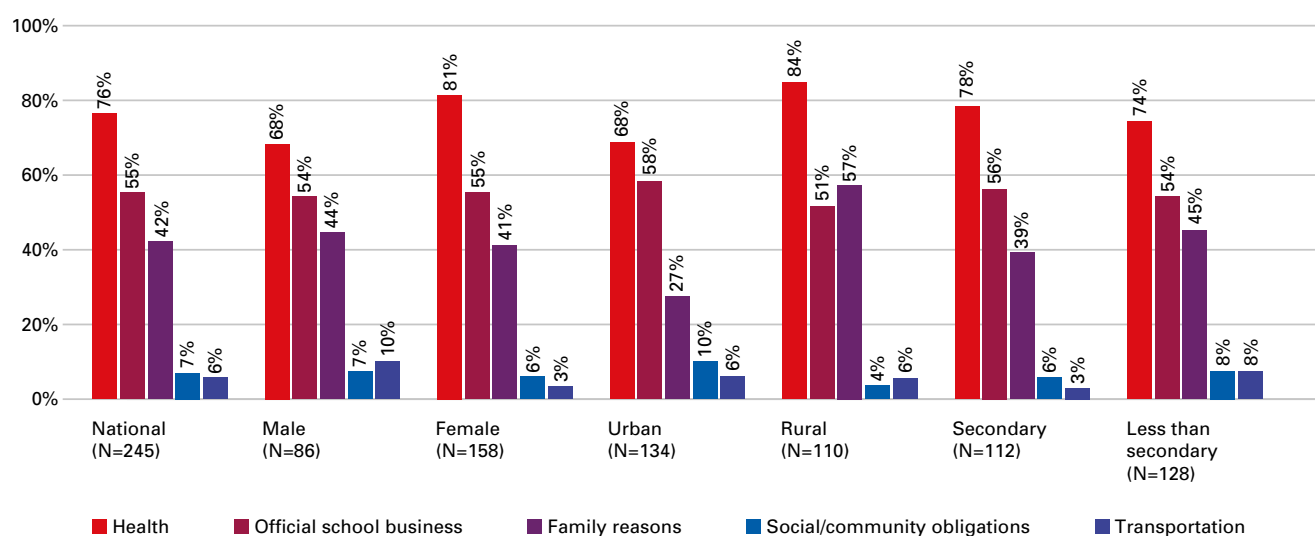
Figure 5: Top five reasons for late arrival / early departure

Health | Family reasons | Social/community obligations | Official school business | Transportation
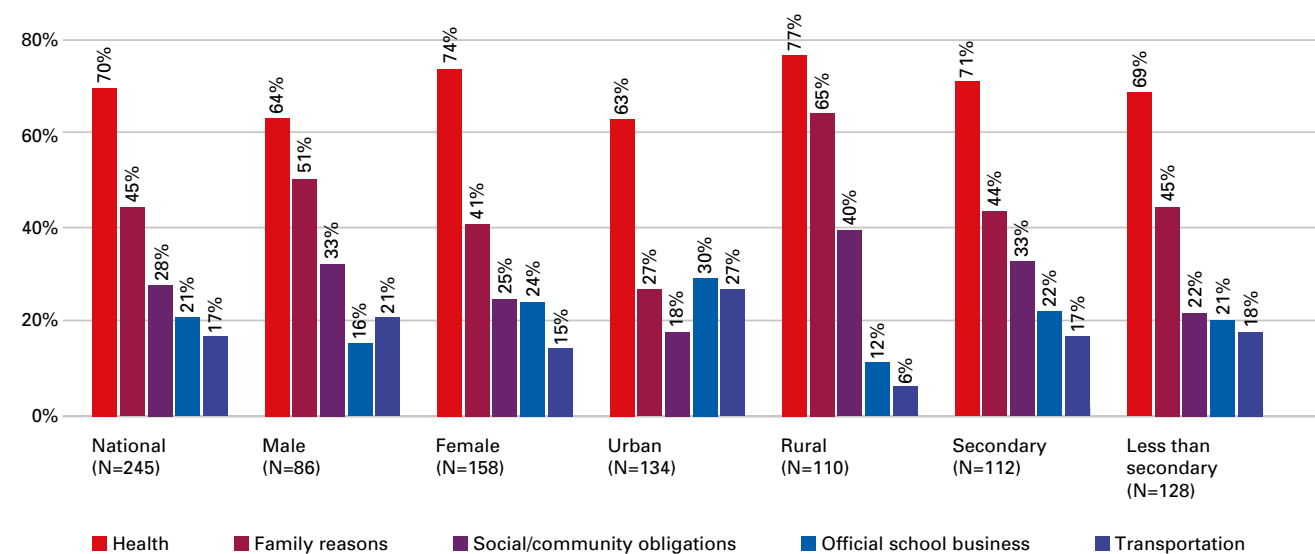
Figure 6: Top five reasons for absence from the classroom

Legend:
- Administrative reasons
- Official school business
- Health
- Too many class preparation tasks
- Lack of teaching materials/ aids required to teach a class
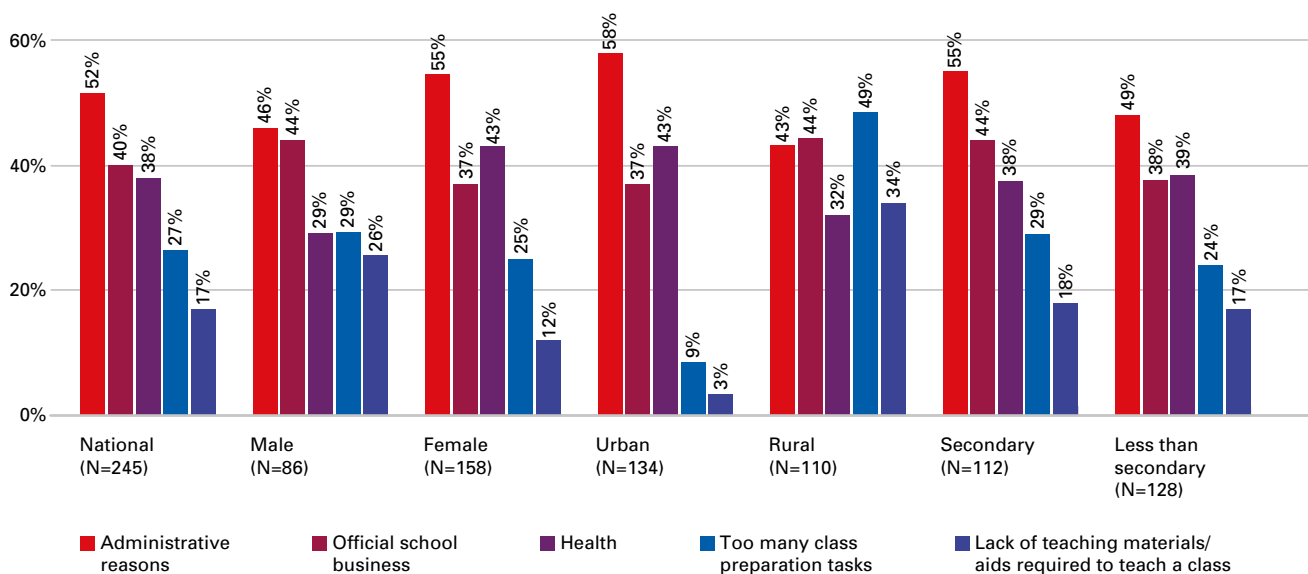
Figure 7: Top five reasons for reduced teaching time in the classroom

Legend:
- Health
- Lack of teaching materials/ aids required to teach a class
- Too many class preparation tasks
- Bad weather (very cold or hot)
- The pupils have trouble following the class
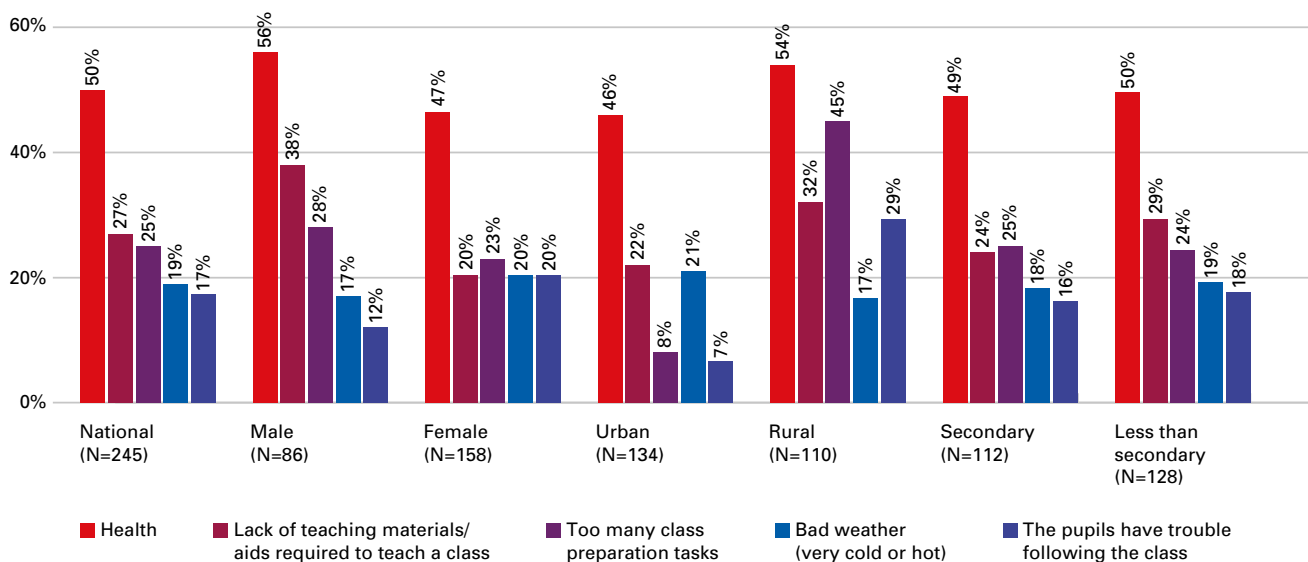
3.2. Sub-national factors

Surveyed and interviewed stakeholders report monitoring visits to schools as a regular occurrence. Close to three-quarters of surveyed teachers reported that school inspectors and academic advisors visit their school regularly. The proportion is higher among teachers in urban areas, where 80 per cent agreed with this statement, than in rural areas, where just over two-thirds did. More than half of teachers reported that school inspectors and academic advisors heavily discourage absenteeism. A similar proportion said that they frequently sanction teacher absenteeism.

Figure 8: Proportion of teachers who agreed with the following statements about school inspectors
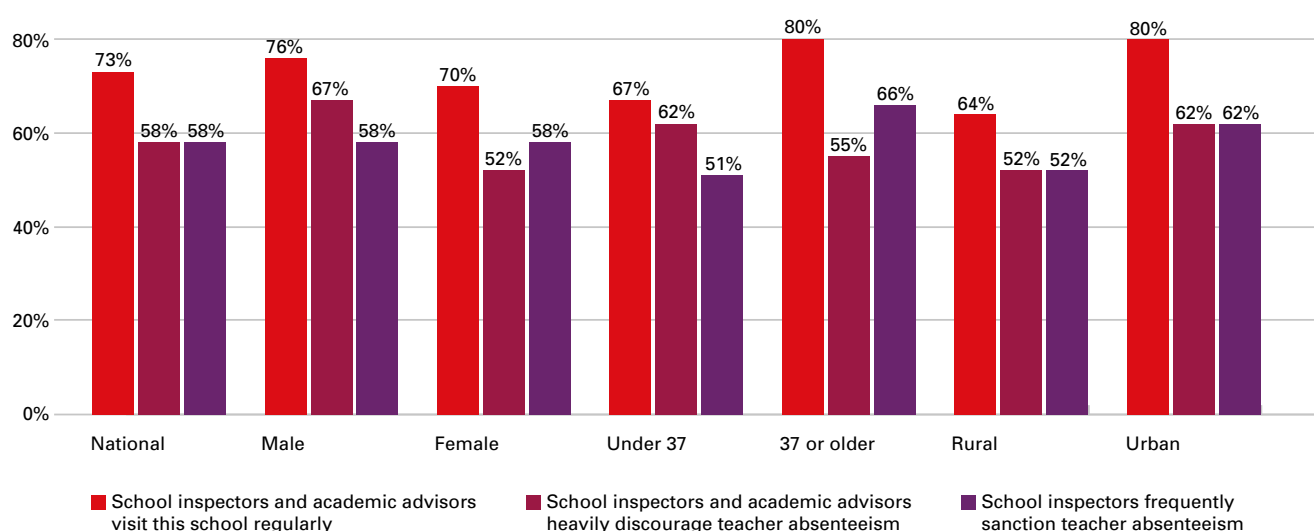
The survey did not establish a clear relationship between teachers' absences and the reports of inspectors' visits. It found that that urban teachers who agreed that inspectors and advisors discourage teacher absenteeism were more likely to report regular absence from school than those who disagreed. The SDI study found a significant negative correlation between the frequency of visits from sub-national authorities and district-level absence rates.

The incongruous findings suggest that how these inspection visits are carried out has consequences. In the TTT study, interviewed head teachers and sub-national officials reported that these visits play a crucial role in the accountability system around teacher absenteeism. School inspectors and pedagogical technicians visit schools and, among other monitoring activities, check the daily teacher attendance records. They note down positive and negative aspects of practices within the school then provide feedback to head teachers on how to improve, including on tracking attendance and following up of absences. Sometimes pedagogical technicians provide feedback to teachers directly on how to improve their teaching practices including, where relevant, the importance of attendance and increasing time on task. In their next visits, inspectors and technicians then follow-up on the actions taken based on their feedback.

District and provincial offices also play a role in verifying reports of unapproved absences and make recommendations on sanctions for chronic cases. Head teachers and teachers also reported some instances of inspectors recommending withholding salary on the basis of teachers' absence records during these visits.

Transportation shortages are reported by district officials to be a general challenge in carrying out supervision visits. They reported that insufficiency of means of transport, including fuel, at the district offices have impacted supervisors' punctuality at schools and made it impossible to visit all schools as frequently as they are expected to.

Another issue raised by provincial officials is the importance for coordination between offices. Mobile platforms, such as WhatApp groups, were reported to be in use as a means of communication between provincial and district officials and head teachers in Tete and Zambezia provinces. This type of communication was credited by a head teacher as reducing the frequency of in-person meetings at the district level which would have required him to be absent from school.

3.3. Community factors

Transportation challenges and the distance between teachers' homes and school were among the most commonly raised reasons for lack of punctuality reported by teachers in urban areas. One in four urban teachers raised transportation as a main reason for arriving late or leaving early from school, compared to only 6 per cent of rural teachers. Additionally, one in five urban teachers nominated distance to school as a main reason behind lack of punctuality, compared to less than 10 per cent of rural teachers.

The likely reason for this difference, according to interviewees, is that schools in rural areas are more likely to have on-site or nearby teacher housing. During the week, therefore, these teachers have only a short walk to school. In urban areas, teachers who do not live within walking distance of school have to commute daily and are more likely to use public transport than their rural colleagues. It is important to note, however, that despite the rarity of this barrier, rural teachers were more likely to be absent from school regularly.

Some interviewees expressed sympathy for teachers who had to cover a great distance to reach school. However, some other head teachers and sub-national officials argued that distance and transport to school were not justifiable reasons for lack of punctuality. A couple of interviewees believed that teachers should know when their schools start, the expected travel time between home and school and thus adjust their departure time from home accordingly. Another noted that there were teachers who live far from school but who, nevertheless, manage to be punctual.

Although a couple of district officials attributed teacher absence from school to teachers traveling long distances to receive their salary, the survey of teachers did not support this as a common reason for absence across the country. Most teachers surveyed (68 per cent) reported that it is easy to receive their salary, with no significant difference by whether they are in an urban or rural area. Only 4 per cent of surveyed teachers said that receiving salary is one of the main reasons they have been absent from school, with rural teachers being more likely to experience this. The national figure is consistent with the most recent SDI survey in Mozambique, which found that only 3 per cent of absent teachers were away from school to receive their pay.

Interviewees reported that their salary payments were made to their bank accounts. Therefore, the main factor that determined how receiving salary can influence teachers' attendance was proximity to financial services. For some interviewees the nearest bank was an easy trip, while others reported that a visit to the bank can take a couple of hours to a full day. Availability of automated teller machines (ATMs) makes a difference as it allows teachers to access their salary outside of business hours.

> Few teachers reported receiving salaries as a reason for absence. The likely reason for the greater challenge with distance and transportation in urban areas, according to interviewees, is that schools in rural areas were more likely to have teacher housing on or near their sites.

Two-thirds of surveyed teachers believed that teachers are respected in their communities and their work is recognized. This rate is higher in urban areas, with 70 per cent of teachers feeling respected and recognized in their community. More than half (56 per cent) of surveyed teachers thought that parents appreciated the value of education and encouraged pupil attendance, similarly more so in urban areas. A lower proportion of 48 per cent, however, thought that parents view teacher absences as a problem, with female teachers and those who had completed secondary school being less likely to agree with this statement.

Some head teachers and sub-district officials reported that they have had instances of parents reporting issues with teacher attendance to them. Several of them reported that most common barrier to community involvement in teacher monitoring was parents' own educational background. Parents who themselves had not completed formal schooling were, according to some teachers and other interviewees in the study, less likely to value education and engage with schools. This is supported by the Afrobarometer 2018 data, with more highly-educated respondents more likely to believe that they will get a response if they go to their local school to report teacher misbehaviour such as absence. This educational gap was larger among women than among men.

3.4. School factors

The majority of surveyed teachers provided positive feedback on their head teachers. Over 70 per cent reported being happy with the feedback they receive from the head teacher, that the head teacher always records teacher absences and that they manage the school and the teachers well. Younger teachers were less likely to be satisfied with the feedback they receive from the head teacher and less likely to believe that their head teacher manages the school well. Teachers in urban areas were more likely to report that their head teachers always record teacher attendances.They were also more likely to believe that their head teacher manages the school and teachers well.

Teachers' perspective on whether head teachers manage their schools well were correlated with regular late arrivals/early departures. This relationship interacted with school location. Only 2 per cent, or one out of 53 of rural teachers who believed their schools were well-managed, also said that they arrived late/departed early regularly. Moreover, a third of urban teachers who did not think their head teachers managed the school well also reported that they themselves regularly arrived late or left early.

Figure 9: Proportion of teachers who regularly arrive late / leave early, by location and whether they believe their head teacher manages the school and teachers well
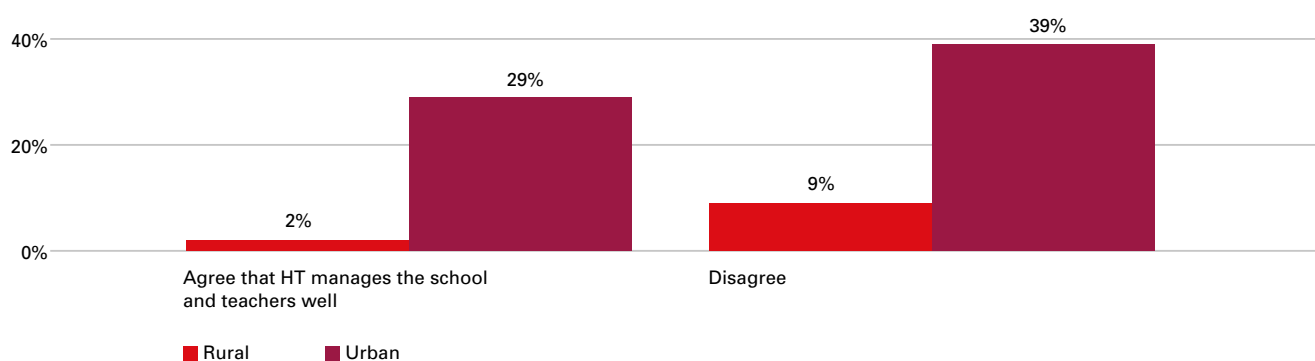
The survey did not establish a clear relationship between teachers' self-reported absence frequencies and their reports on whether the head teacher was always present at school. In interviews, several sub-national officials expressed their opinion that these two factors were related. Although the World Bank's 2014 SDI study found a significant relationship between teacher and head teacher absence, this was not reported in the 2018 study. This can be partially attributed to measurement issues and challenges during data collection.[13]

A lack of teaching materials was reported to impact on teachers' attendance in the classroom and their teaching time while in the classroom, particularly in rural areas. Over 30 per cent of rural teachers cited a lack of teaching materials/aids as one of the reasons they were absent from class or experienced reduced time on task in class. Unsurprisingly, teachers in rural areas were also less likely to agree with the statement that teachers at their school have the teaching materials they need to teach well (50 per cent) than their urban counterparts (65 per cent). These figures were slightly lower than the 77 per cent of schools observed to have minimum learning materials in the SDI survey.

Among the main reasons surveyed teachers selected for being absent from the classroom, even though they were at school, were administrative reasons, official school business and having too many class preparation tasks. In interviews, stakeholders, including students, reported that when teachers were absent from class or did not teach for the full duration of time planned, at times they were grading assignments.

Interviewees held different opinions on the validity of this reason. A number of head teachers and sub-national officials believed that because time for lesson planning and grading of assignments was already included in civil service teachers' responsibilities, this work should not interrupt class time. Some teachers noted that school and classroom overcrowding meant that the volume of marking work is too great to be met by teachers' time outside of work.

3.5. Teacher factors

Health was the most common reason for all types of absences as reported by teachers in the survey. This is consistent with the finding of the 2018 SDI survey, which relied on reasons provided by other school staff on why teachers were absent during unannounced visits. Female teachers were more likely to report health reasons behind absences compared to male teachers. Rural teachers more frequently reported health reasons than urban teachers. Interviewees rarely mentioned specific illnesses, although there were several mentions of chronic conditions regularly preventing teachers from attending school or class. Conditions mentioned specifically were HIV/AIDS and malaria. Beyond teachers' own health, their responsibility for caring for ill family members and attending funerals were also often mentioned by interviewees as a reason for teachers' absence from school.

Other studies have reported on the impact of chronic illnesses such as HIV/AIDS on absenteeism, both directly through its impact on the sufferer, as well as related obligations of caring for ill family members and attending funerals. In 2005, the estimated HIV rate among teachers in Mozambique was just below 15 per cent, with a reported 48 per cent increase in teacher attrition due to HIV/AIDS.[14] Overall, the prevalence of HIV in Mozambique has slightly increased from 11 per cent in 2005 to 12.6 per cent in 2018.[15] The World Health Organization has reported that 5 per cent of all the cases of malaria in the world occur in Mozambique with cases increasing by over 500,000 between 2016 and 2017.[16] Contracting malaria was estimated to cause an average loss of three working days in one Mozambique study.[17]

> Health was the most common reason for all types of absences as reported by teachers in the survey. This is consistent with the finding of the 2018 SDI survey.

The relationship between teachers' motivation and attendance was often raised by interviewees, and is commonly mentioned in the literature around teacher absence in Mozambique. Several interviewees frequently spoke of commitment to the profession as the most important personal dimension behind teacher attendance – more important than any demographic characteristic. This came up particularly in relation to punctuality.

The teacher survey found high levels of overall job satisfaction. Four out of five teachers said that they were satisfied with their jobs. The proportion is even higher among older teachers and those in urban areas. However, a lower proportion of teachers agreed that their colleagues were satisfied with their jobs, particularly younger teachers.

Figure 10: Proportion of teachers who agreed with the following statements about their professional satisfaction, access to training and knowledge level
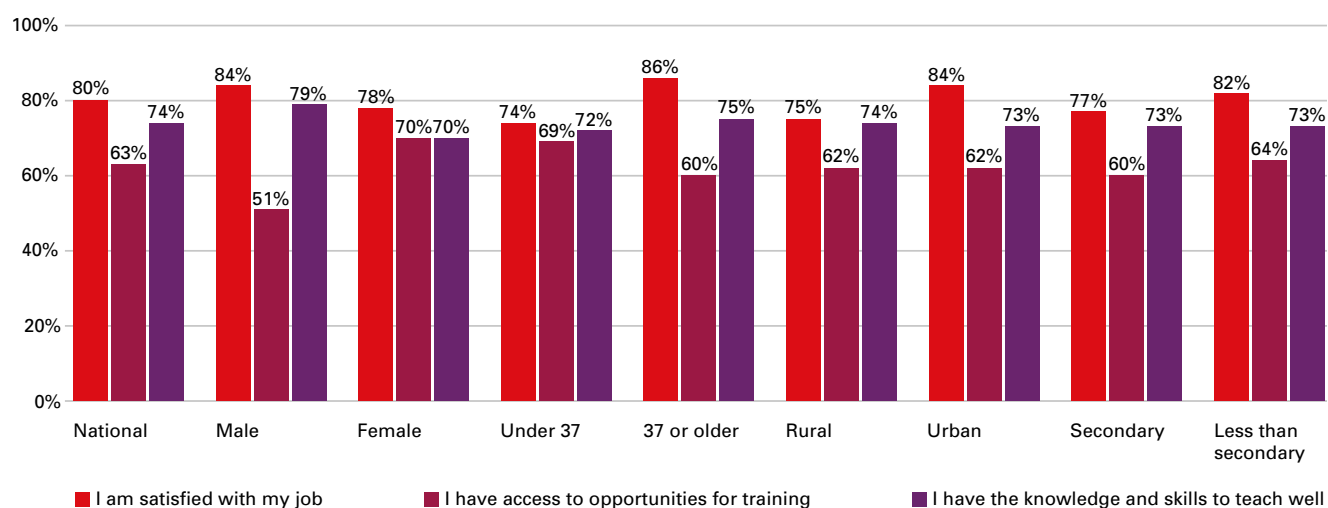
Self-efficacy was high, with three out of four teachers believing that they have the knowledge and skills needed to teach well. In urban areas this was found to be an in important element in punctuality. Two-thirds of urban teachers who did not believe that they have the knowledge and skills needed to teach well reported regularly being late or leaving early, compared to fewer than a quarter of teachers who believe they have the requisite knowledge and skills. With this relationship, supporting continuing education may also have affected teachers' behaviour. The government had been doing just this, with interviewees reporting scholarships for teachers and head teachers to continue their studies. Two-thirds of surveyed teachers believed that they have access to opportunities for training, with this rate higher among female than male teachers.

Teachers' study workload, however, needs to be balanced with teaching. Although the increased opportunities for further study were credited by some interviewees as a motivating factor for teachers, balancing study commitments with teaching may also impact teachers' focus. In the teacher survey, just under a third of teachers reported that they were currently studying. Overwhelmingly, they were enrolled in a university-level programme. More than half of all teachers in urban areas were studying, compared to only 15 per cent of those in rural areas.

However, rural teachers who were currently studying were significantly more likely to regularly miss classes when they were at school. This finding is based on the fairly small number of teachers in the survey who fit these characteristics. It is, however, supported by several interviewed head teachers and sub-national officials who attributed absences to study commitments, particularly in the provinces of Gaza, Manica and Inhambane. One head teacher in an urban school in Gaza province, for example, noted that some teachers "can go in the classroom and start reading college books and not work with the children". Some of these stakeholders noted that these instances were increasing, especially with more teachers undertaking distance tertiary learning.

Figure 11: Proportion of teachers who reported regularly missing classes when they were at school, by location and study status
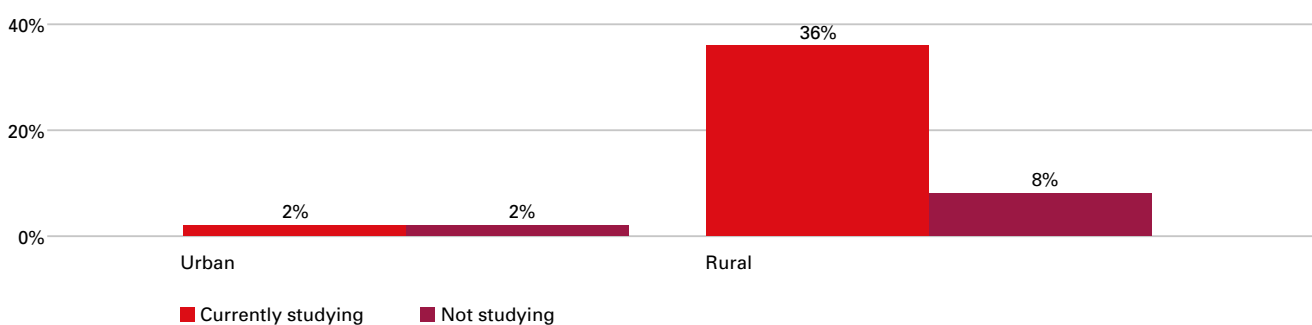
Other in-service training programmes were also credited by some interviewees with causing teachers and head teachers to miss school. This can be for several days at a time. However, some district and provincial officials reported that for short in-service training courses efforts have been made to schedule them on weekends or to offer a mixture of morning and afternoon sessions to allow teachers to attend without missing classes.

As discussed in an earlier sub-section, interviewees largely responded positively about the salary levels teachers receive. Accordingly, income pressures appear to not be significant factor in teacher absenteeism in Mozambique. More than half of all teachers surveyed reported being happy with their salary. Only 5 per cent of teachers reported being engaged in another income-generating activity or teaching in more than one school, even those who were less than satisfied with their salary level. Correspondingly, less than 1 per cent of teachers nominated other income-generating activity as a reason for being absent from school.

Finally, some interviewees did raise the issue of teachers who lacked commitment to the profession and motivation to teach. They observed teachers who would not attend class or did not deliver their teaching duties while they are in class. A potential complication arising from the high level of engagement in continuing education among teachers arises if, as reported in a previous study,[18] many teachers were using further studies to leave the teaching profession. A related cause for concern would be if teaching roles were being utilized to gain entry to a well-paid civil service role, and applicants were not motivated by teaching itself. For example, one head teacher in Gaza observed that "some colleagues who had hoped for a career change might have scheduled classes, but if they were in the classroom they would receive a request for a meeting and be forced to miss the class". A district official in Zambezia noted that "we have teachers who follow this professional career simply by necessity and not by vocation and they will only be fulfilled by the salary at the end of the month".

Continuing education may increase teacher motivation but also creates a challenge in balancing teaching and study responsibilities, which in rural areas in particular was found as a cause of increased absence from class. Another potential complication brought about by the high proportion of continuing education among teachers arises if, as reported in a previous study, many teachers were using further studies to leave the teaching profession.

One particular behaviour was mentioned by a number of stakeholders across different levels and in different provinces as indicating a lack of commitment: being distracted by mobile phones. Sub-district officials, head teachers and students reported having observed teachers who are on their phone when meant to be teaching. One head teacher at a rural school in Inhambane said that it was fortunate that their school does not have mobile network coverage, because that prevents teachers from using their phone at school. In the examples provided by interviewees, teachers were speaking on the phone, working on their own studies or engaging with social media. As a district official in Manica said, it "is normal to get to school to find the teacher is on WhatsApp, Facebook, Twitter, everything else, leaving the students there to swarm, to make a noise, I do not know what, unless he gave an activity directed to the students". It is not surprising therefore that another district official in Gaza suggested "the phone is not to go to the classroom, [because] this is the big topical problem."

Section 4: Policy implications

The Time to Teach study in Mozambique sought to identify major themes and factors at each level of the education system that affect specific types of teachers' time on task. Insights from fieldwork, such as suggestions on how to curb absenteeism offered by teachers and other respondents, are combined in this section with existing literature and national strategies and plans so as to develop a set of policy recommendations to improve teacher attendance.

Recommendations are presented here by policy area. In the first instance, the recommendations here are directed to MINEDH. However, they are pertinent to education actors at all levels, including MINEDH, DPEC, District Services for Education, Youth and Technology (Serviço Distrital de Educaçâo, Juventude e Tecnologia, SDEJT) and schools, as well as development partners. They are described here around three themes: national policies and cross-sector collaboration, absence monitoring and reporting and school management and supervision.

4.1. National policies and cross-sector collaborations

As the overwhelming majority of teachers are employed in the public system the Government of Mozambique has a number of levers through its management of the civil service to influence teachers' incentives and motivation. Government initiatives outside of the education sector were also identified in this study as having had an impact on teacher attendance. This study identified several recommendations at the national level:

- Further investigate the topic of teacher motivation and professional commitment. For example, monitoring the attrition rate for teachers – including those who use civil service career change provisions to leave the teaching profession – and continued monitoring of attendance, punctuality and classroom time use. Utilize these considerations in decisions on teachers' promotion and progression.

- Consider study leave or time allowance for teachers who are undertaking recognized further study. Ensure that the parameters around such allowances are well-communicated to schools and teachers. Teachers should know that tasks associated with studies should not be completed outside of school hours or during those allotted times, and not during teaching hours. Work with teacher training institutions to ensure that time commitments associated with study programmes are clearly communicated during enrolment so as to assist teachers and schools to plan for and balance between work and study commitments.

- In partnership with the Ministry of Health and its sub-national entities, monitor the burden of endemic diseases including HIV/AIDS and malaria on the education system, and identify how the education system can both support and be supported in reducing this burden. This may include, for example, undertaking awareness raising among teachers on the symptoms of malaria, importance of testing, destigmatization of HIV/AIDS and role of anti-retroviral therapy, with the aim both of changing teachers' behaviours but also harnessing their role to reach out to students, families and the community. These can be included in the increased health and hygiene school supports to schools following COVID-19-related closures.

- Support the Government of Mozambique, the Ministry of Economics and Finance, the Bank of Mozambique and other development partners to continue to improve access to ATMs, particularly in rural areas, and promote digitization of government salary payments. The Government's National Financial Inclusion Strategy appears to have reduced the instances of absences due to accessing

salary payments. However, some challenges accessing financial services remain in rural areas. Within the education sector, support SDEJT and schools to ensure teachers are able to access ATMs.

4.2. Absence monitoring and reporting

Findings in this study suggest that efforts that have been put in place to strengthen and implement the monitoring, reporting and sanctioning of teacher absenteeism have been noticed and have had an impact on how stakeholders understand and action absences. A number of suggestions to continue reinforcing these efforts include:

- Almost one in five teachers reported that they arrived late or departed early from school once a week or more. However, few government officials included lack of punctuality as part of their otherwise nuanced definitions of absenteeism. It would be pertinent, therefore, to more strongly incorporate punctuality as a component of attendance in teacher management policies, including extending sanctions for absences to also apply to chronic unexcused lateness/early departures. This would assist in further clarifying behavioural expectations for teachers, head teachers and the community.

- Continue to monitor distances and duration of travel to school, including in order to map the need for teacher housing at new and existing schools, and support community involvement in the construction and maintenance of school housing. Also include monitoring of travel time and transportation options in urban areas, to consider what support may be needed to address lack of punctuality.

- Parents with low levels of educational attainment were reported to be less likely to engage with schools and report teacher absences. There is thus a need to train school leaders and education officials in community engagements that encourage involvement of parents from different socio-economic and educational backgrounds in their child's learning and school governance. As a start, for example, schools could recognize and encourage home practices that support children's learning, such as telling stories in local languages and simple practices like asking what children learned at school. Consider whether some groups of parents are being excluded from committee representation and/or from current channels of communication used by schools.

- Continue to strengthen the school inspection and supervision system, particularly focusing on the feedback loop between schools and supervisors. This may include monitoring how useful and practical is feedback provided to school leaders, as well as the extent to which schools are able to undertake follow-up.
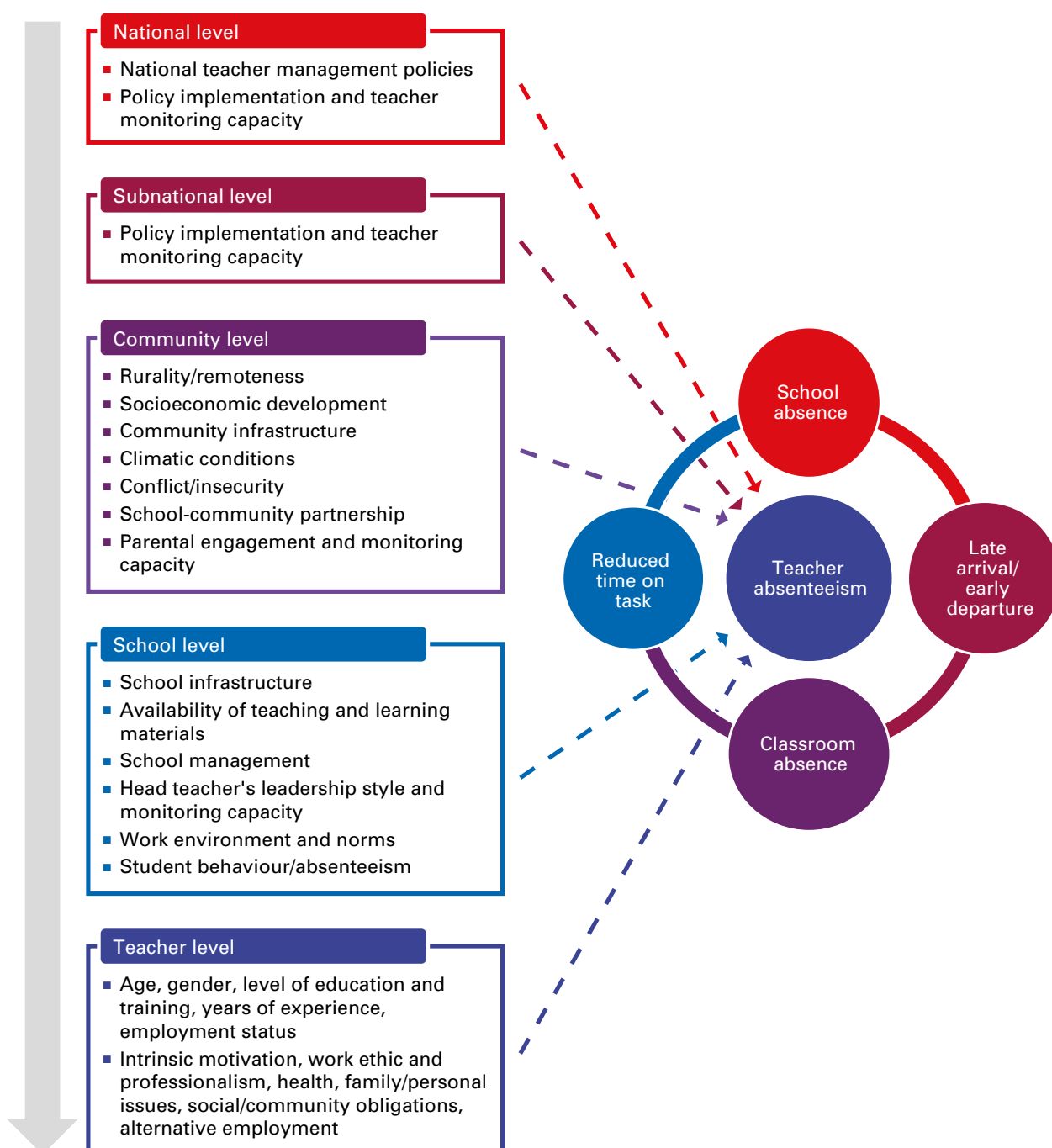
4.3. School management and supervision

School leaders and their direct supporters play a crucial role in supporting teachers' attendance and time on task. As one district official in Manica noted, "corrective action is taken at all levels". A number of suggested priorities in this area were raised in this study:

- Support school leadership and school management practices, including through continuous professional development for head teachers, pedagogical leaders and other members of school leadership. This should involve effective timetabling practices, monitoring of teacher performance and community engagement.

- Monitor and ensure the adequacy of teaching and learning materials at all schools, including mapping and identifying any existing bottlenecks in adequate provision of textbooks and teaching aids, focusing on rural schools and areas reporting shortages.

- Harness the potential of technology in the accountability system around teaching performance. Head teachers and sub-district officials reported using mobile-based groups to coordinate policy implementation and as well as receiving reports of performance issues including teacher absences. There is an opportunity to potentially scale up their use more broadly, including examining their current effectiveness and scope, and who is currently included and excluded by their use.

- Mitigate the negative impacts that these developments could have in the classroom. With the rapid proliferation of mobile phone and internet penetration in the country, stakeholders in this study reported increasingly observing its use as a source of distraction, keeping teachers from attending or effectively using time in class. The ubiquity of these reports suggests that it would be justified to consider banning teachers from using personal technology in the classroom.

ANNEX: Time to Teach Study in Mozambique

Understanding teacher absenteeism from a system perspective

The Time to Teach project adopts Guerrero *et al.*'s[19] explanatory model with an important modification that consists of adding two further groups of variables. These variables operate on two additional levels of the education system, the 'national' and the 'sub-national'. These variables are included to measure the impact of national teacher management policies and sub-national policy implementation on the dimensions of teacher absenteeism.

National level
- National teacher management policies
- Policy implementation and teacher monitoring capacity

Subnational level
- Policy implementation and teacher monitoring capacity

Community level
- Rurality/remoteness
- Socioeconomic development
- Community infrastructure
- Climatic conditions
- Conflict/insecurity
- School-community partnership
- Parental engagement and monitoring capacity

School level
- School infrastructure
- Availability of teaching and learning materials
- School management
- Head teacher's leadership style and monitoring capacity
- Work environment and norms
- Student behaviour/absenteeism

Teacher level
- Age, gender, level of education and training, years of experience, employment status
- Intrinsic motivation, work ethic and professionalism, health, family/personal issues, social/community obligations, alternative employment

School absence

Reduced time on task

Teacher absenteeism

Late arrival/ early departure

Classroom absence

Methodology

The TTT field study in Mozambique was done at the same time as the World Bank's Service Delivery Indicators (SDI) study. Both studies were conducted in partnership with MINEDH and with the same fieldwork partner. While the SDI is largely a quantitative study focused on understanding the levels of teacher ability, teacher effort and student outcomes, the TTT study in Mozambique was focused on unpacking the qualitative questions around the reasons behind teacher absenteeism.

To collect data the UNICEF Innocenti team designed a range of qualitative and quantitative tools, including in-depth interviews, focus group discussions (FGDs) and a pen-and-paper survey. Dedicated tools were used for each respondent group so as to reflect the participants' expert knowledge and unique perspective. Some were also modified for each type of school. The pen-and-paper survey was administered to all teachers serving in the selected primary schools to supplement and triangulate teacher interview data. Finally, an observation tool was designed to record enumerators' observations on teacher absenteeism, teacher-student interaction and teacher working relations during visits to selected schools.

Box 2. Time to Teach study data collection in Mozambique

20 schools visited	**52** interviews and FGDs	**245** teachers surveyed

In Mozambique, the TTT study visited 20 primary schools in September and October 2018. Data collectors completed 52 interviews and FGDs with five different types of education system actors: sub-national education officials, community leaders, head teachers, teachers and students. Additionally, 245 teachers completed pen-and-paper surveys.

At the government level, respondents included provincial and district representatives familiar with school governance and teacher evaluation processes. Community respondents had an intimate knowledge of the selected schools and school staff, and in most cases served on the school committee. In each selected school, the study involved the head teacher, serving teachers, and FGDs with six or seven pupils.

The main data collection was completed in two phases to accommodate the agreement that TTT visits should be conducted after schools had been visited for the SDI study. Three selected schools had to be substituted with other schools of similar characteristics as they were not able to be visited on the scheduled days. Interviews were conducted in Portuguese, with interviewers allocated to provinces where they speak the predominant local language in order to assist with any communication difficulties.

Data analysis

The 245 pen-to-paper teacher surveys from the 20 schools were cleaned and compiled. Information that could identify participants was removed. Tests were run in order to compare teachers' responses with qualitative findings, and to identify diversions or similarities. The main aim of the quantitative data analysis was to provide further insights across the 20 selected schools, while highlighting variations between regions and teacher characteristics.

The 52 interviews and FGDs that were conducted with five different education system actors typically took one hour and were transcribed word-for-word and translated into English. To systematically analyze and interpret this data, the research team employed Thematic Content Analysis (TCA). While content analysis is a broad methodology that can be applied in various ways, the approach adopted to draft this report is closer to the interpretive analysis of latent content with the use of a codebook that comes from the deductive reading of existing literature and the inductive reading of the transcripts. Coding was done manually, and assisted the organization of data into themes. The aim of the qualitative data analysis was to enrich the findings from the quantitative data.

Challenges and limitations

Like all studies relying on self-reported data and conducted under time and budget constraints, TTT Mozambique is not free of methodological limitations. The three most significant challenges likely to have emerged during data collection are:

Response bias, including social desirability bias, may have been a significant challenge. For, in some contexts, participants may have perceived the study as potentially threatening their employment status. These limitations were taken into consideration when interpreting data. Surveyors were trained to communicate the objectives, clarify any misconceptions regarding implications of voluntary participation and to highlight the principles of anonymity and confidentiality.

Selection bias may have also been an issue. The selection of interviewed and surveyed teachers was limited to the teachers who were in school on the day of the visit. This means that some frequently absent teachers may not have been interviewed or surveyed. To pre-empt this problem, school visits were announced and teachers were informed about them in advance. However, this does not exclude the possibility of built-in bias among study participants .

Representativeness of survey data is a challenge due to the small size of the TTT survey (N=245) and purposive approach in selecting schools. The TTT findings, therefore, can provide a snapshot of the selected schools, rather than a representative view of the situation across all schools in Mozambique. For this reason, the majority of findings reported depend on the systematic analysis of both quantitative and qualitative data.

References

1   Bassi, M., Medina, O. & Nhampossa, L. 2019. *Education Service Delivery in Mozambique: A Second Round of the Service Delivery Indicators Survey.* Washington, D.C: World Bank Group.

2   For example: Guerrero, G., Leon, J., Zapata, M., Sugimaru, C., & Cueto, S. (2012). *What works to improve teacher attendance in developing countries?: A systematic review*; World Bank. 2015. *Mozambique - Service delivery indicators : Mozambique service delivery indicators (English). Mozambique service delivery indicators brief; education.* Washington, D.C.: World Bank Group.

3   Guerrero, G., Leon, J., Zapata, M., Sugimaru, C., & Cueto, S. (2012). *What works to improve teacher attendance in developing countries?: A systematic review*

4   Ministério de Educação e Desenvolvimento Humano (MINEDH). 2017. *Relatório do Estudo Holístico da Situaçã*o do Professor em Moçambique. 2015. Maputo: MINEDH.

5   Afrobarometer. 2015. Mozambique Round 5 data (updated July 2015), available at http://www.afrobarometer.org.

6   Universalia. 2019. *Summative GPE country program evaluation Batch 4, Country 11: Mozambique.* Final Evaluation Report July 2019. Quebec: Universalia Management Group.

7   Ibid

8   UNICEF Mozambique. 2018. Budget Brief 2018 Education Sector.

9   Universalia. 2019. *Summative GPE country program evaluation Batch 4, Country 11: Mozambique.* Final Evaluation Report July 2019. Quebec: Universalia Management Group.

10   Ministério de Educação e Desenvolvimento Humano (MINEDH). 2017. *Relatório do Estudo Holístico da Situação do Professor em Moçambique*. 2015. Maputo: MINEDH; UNESCO. 2019. *Revisão de Políticas Educacionais Moçambique.* Paris: UNESCO.

11   Beutel, M. 2011. *Teachers Talking: Primary teachers' contributions to the quality of education in Mozambique.* London: Voluntary Service Overseas.

12   Ministério de Educação e Desenvolvimento Humano (MINEDH). 2017. *Relatório do Estudo Holístico da Situação do Professor em Moçambique.* 2015. Maputo: MINEDH.

13   Bassi, M., Medina, O. & Nhampossa, L. 2019. *Education Service Delivery in Mozambique: A Second Round of the Service Delivery Indicators Survey.* Washington, D.C: World Bank Group.

14   United Nations Economic Commission for Africa. 2008. *Securing our Future: Report of the Commission on HIV/AIDS and Governance in Africa.* Addis Ababa: Commission on HIV/AIDS and Governance in Africa.

15   World Bank. 2020. "Prevalence of HIV, total (% of population ages 15-49)". World Development Indicators.

16   WHO. 2018. World Malaria Report. Geneva: World Health Organization.

17   GfK. 2010. *Brief analysis of the impact of malaria in the private sector.*

18 Beutel, M. 2011. *Teachers Talking: Primary teachers' contributions to the quality of education in Mozambique.* London: Voluntary Service Overseas.

19 Guerrero, G., Leon, J., Zapata, M., Sugimaru, C., & Cueto, S. (2012). *What works to improve teacher attendance in developing countries?: A systematic review;* Guerrero, G., Leon, J., Zapata, M., & Cueto, S. (2013). Getting teachers back to the classroom. A systematic review on what works to improve teacher attendance in developing countries. *Journal of Development Effectiveness*, *5*(4), 466-488.

for every child, answers

unicef
Office of Research – Innocenti