



The teacher salary system in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC)

Case study

Laura Brannelly



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About the author

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Acronyms

| | |
|----------------|---|
| DRC | Democratic Republic of Congo |
| DFID | Department for International Development (UK aid agency) |
| EMIS | Education Management Information Systems |
| MEPSP | <i>Ministère de l'Enseignement Primaire, Secondaire et Professionnel</i> – Ministry of Primary, Secondary and Vocational Education |
| MPS | Ministry of Public Services |
| PETS | Public Expenditure Tracking Survey |
| PURUS | <i>Projet d'Urgence de Rehabilitation Urbaine et Social</i> – Emergency Urban and Social Rehabilitation Project |
| SECOPE | <i>Service de Contrôle et de la Paie des Enseignants</i> – Central Office for Teacher Salaries and Monitoring |
| SECOPEP | <i>Service de Contrôle et de la Paie des Enseignants Provincial</i> – Provincial Office for Teacher Salaries and Monitoring |
| TMS | Teacher Management Systems |



1 Introduction

This case study, which was undertaken as a desk-based rapid review of recent publicly available English-language literature (academic and grey), provides an overview of the teacher remuneration system in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), with particular attention paid to the institutional systems, or ‘cogs’, which work together to enable teachers to be paid adequately and on time. The case study is meant to give a clear understanding of how such a system actually works (or is prevented from working) in a unique country context and is framed by the issues discussed in the larger policy paper (Dolan et al., 2012), which examines teacher remuneration in countries that are affected by fragility and/or conflict and provides potential solutions to address the challenges that governments and donors face in developing and implementing an effective system. The case study was completed during the first half of 2011, so any developments that have taken place or been documented since then have not been referenced.

1.1 Critical cogs of an effective teacher salary system

Strong financial and information management systems and resources are critical cogs for the building of an effective teacher remuneration system (Goldsmith, 2010). Where such cogs are not in place, governments struggle to meet the demands of teacher salaries. The financial resources necessary for the proper functioning of these cogs include the national government, communities and donors. The important elements of each of these systems are described in Table 1 below.

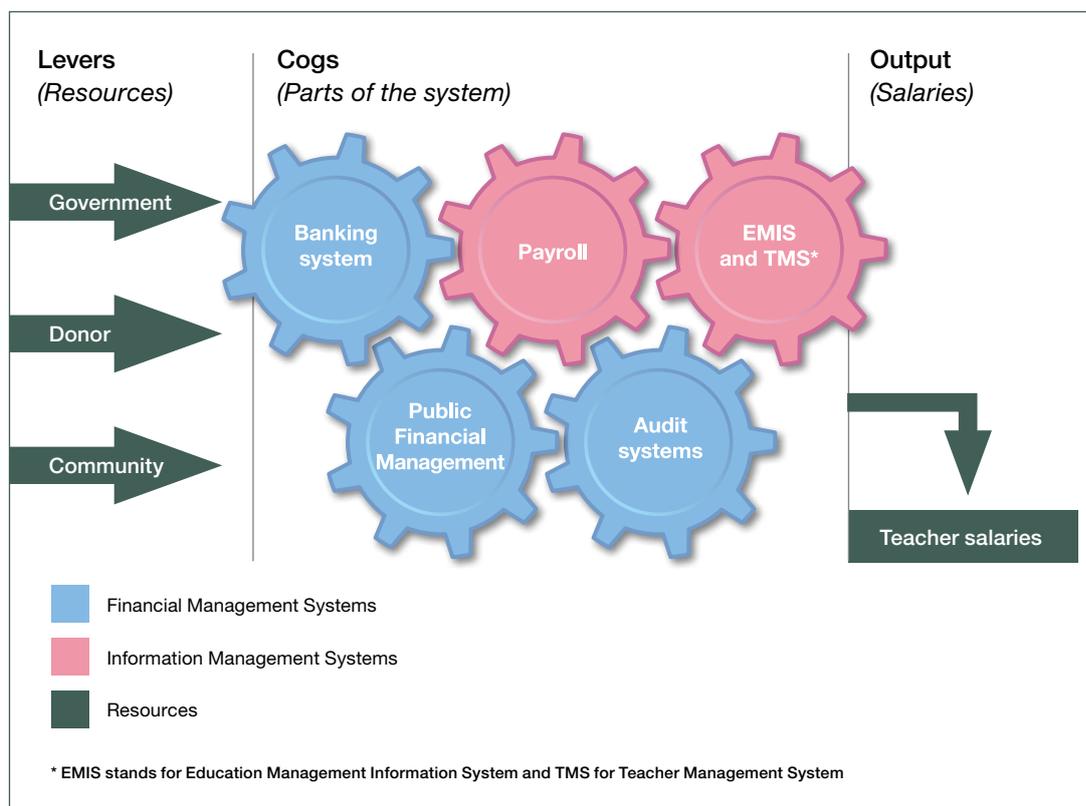
| Table 1: Summary description of the parts of an effective teacher salary system | |
|--|--|
| Components | Purpose |
| Financial management systems | |
| Banking system | Provides reliable records and is relatively safe (i.e. less leakage than cash delivery) so is preferred mechanism for distributing teacher salaries |
| Public Financial Management (PFM) system | Helps to make public financial transactions transparent and accountable, reduces leakages and ensures that money is used for its intended purpose |
| Auditing systems | Help to strengthen PFM; internal and external auditing are important for tracking public expenditures |
| Information management systems | |
| Education Management Information System/ Teacher Management System (EMIS/TMS) | Collects and disseminates information necessary to ensure the efficient and effective practice of paying teacher salaries, i.e. information on teacher qualifications, years teaching, days present/absent, etc. |
| Payroll | Records names and numbers of teachers, salary and other important information for salary payment |



| Table 1: Summary description of the parts of an effective teacher salary system | |
|---|--|
| Components | Purpose |
| Resources/Funding | |
| Government | Ideally the primary source of funding for salaries, but often weakened/compromised in FCAS |
| Community | Can provide cash/in-kind contributions to teacher salaries |
| Donors | Play a significant role in providing funding and/or technical support for teacher salaries |

Figure 1 illustrates the interdependent relationship between each of these cogs:

Figure 1: The cogs and levers of an effective teacher salary system



Of course, it is important to understand that each of the cogs above do not operate within a vacuum, but are very much impacted by external factors unique to the country within which they operate.

The following sections will therefore discuss the background and development of the DRC's teacher remuneration system and will provide an assessment of the current system by analysing each of the critical cogs defined above.



2 The context of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC)

The DRC is still recovering from years of civil war which have – despite a peace accord in 2003 and successful elections in 2006 – left pockets of instability, particularly within the east of the country, and a fragile education system and civil service. In a country with limited banking infrastructure and a geographical area similar to Western Europe, the logistics of paying over 300,000 teachers across nearly 45,000 primary and secondary schools are challenging (Mokonzi and Kadongo, 2010).

Government expenditure on education dropped significantly after independence – falling from 30 per cent of total government budget in 1960 to a low of two per cent in 2004 (AFDB/OECD, 2008). This has improved in recent years, reaching 13 per cent in 2009, but still falls short of the suggested 20 per cent allocation recommended by the Global Campaign for Education (Mokonzi and Kadongo, 2010). Salary expenditure is the largest area of expenditure within education, consisting of four-fifths of the education budget (Mokonzi and Kadongo, 2010), yet teacher salary levels remain among the lowest in the world and have declined in real terms by up to 40 per cent in recent years, keeping teachers close to the international poverty line (UNICEF, 2010). Teacher strikes in response to low and irregular pay are common and have had a significant impact on education delivery, even delaying the start of the 2007/08 school year (AFDB/OECD, 2008). Furthermore, the government's response has tended to consist of increased bonuses and additional allowances, keeping base-wages stagnant, and failing to address systemic issues and corruption, compounding the problems of irregular and unpredictable pay (World Bank, 2008). As a result, inequality in teacher pay and opacity within the system have increased, concurrently complicating teacher payment processes and making the system more difficult to monitor.

As the country has stabilised, donors have sought more systemic and longer-term approaches to finance the education sector, including teacher salaries. However, levels of engagement have been restricted by issues of poor financial management, institutional capacity, absence of reliable data and coherent sector strategy (Greeley, 2007).

This case study is intended to inform the wider research study on effective teacher salary systems in post-conflict and fragile states. After providing an overview of the current teacher salary system in the DRC and how it has developed over time, it will examine the different 'cogs' of the teacher salary payment system and the linkages between them, highlighting key challenges and opportunities for reform. It will conclude with suggestions as to how donors can engage to support the payment of teacher salaries.



3 The teacher salary payment system in the DRC

3.1 Overview of the current system

Just under one fifth of schools in the DRC are directly managed by the state, with more than 70 per cent of schools managed by churches, and the rest privately run (World Bank, 2008). However, the state has responsibility for providing teacher salaries, and the operating and maintenance budgets of all public schools, whether they are managed by the state or churches.

The process for paying teachers is long, bureaucratically dense and largely cash-based (see Annex 1 for a detailed map of the process at national and provincial levels). Broadly speaking the system operates as follows: Salary statements are produced by SECOPE (the *Service de Contrôle et de la Paie des Enseignants* – Central Office for Teacher Salaries and Monitoring, which is the public entity in charge of teacher management), who present the final salary envelope for each province to the Ministry of Budget and Finance. Details of the payroll are sent via planes to provincial offices, SECOPEP (the *Service de Contrôle et de la Paie des Enseignants Provincial* – Provincial Office for Teacher Salaries and Monitoring). Concurrently, the funds are transferred from the Treasury to the provincial branches of the Central Bank, or authorised commercial banks. The Central Bank makes a formal transfer order instructing local banks to make the payment with details of the names of teacher and salary amounts. The listings are checked by SECOPEP, the Provincial Education office (PROVED), and the Credit Manager. The latter then authorises the cash to be withdrawn from the bank by public accountants of the Ministry of Primary, Secondary and Vocational Education (or *Ministère de l'Enseignement Primaire, Secondaire et Professionnel*, MEPSP). The cash is then supposed to be transported to headteachers via *gestionnaires* (school network administrators), although headteachers often have to travel to collect from the *gestionnaires*. Headteachers sign a receipt to confirm that payment has been received and they are then responsible for paying their teachers. Teachers are required to sign payroll lists on receipt of payment. The process between the withdrawal of monies from the bank and transportation to headteachers can vary between provinces and involve other entities, notably school networks and Civil Service Pay Commissions¹ (who are technically not responsible for payment of teachers) (World Bank, 2008; Verhaghe, 2007).

The whole process is lengthy and subject to delays, taking between two and three weeks for public accountants to receive funds at provincial level, after which additional time is then needed to transport funds to school level (Verhaghe, 2007). Additionally, provincial inconsistencies in processes, such as different processes for teaching and administrative staff, differing roles of the Pay Commission and *gestionnaires*, and different requirements on copies of signed listings and receipts, make it difficult to effectively govern and audit the process. It also opens up the system for personal gain and abuse of power by individuals. This also suggests a lack of central authority and regulation (Verhaghe, 2007).

School fees are endemic across the DRC. When the education budget collapsed, fees were the only source of remuneration for teachers and were later used to top up teacher salaries in response to low and irregular payment by the state, and as the only source of income for teachers not included on the official payroll. It is estimated that the burden of school fees financed by households amounts to US\$63 million (World Bank, 2008). The government has made a commitment to abolish school fees, increase teacher salaries, make payments more regular and certify teachers not currently on the payroll, but it has struggled to meet these commitments (Greeley, 2007).

¹ Pay commissions have oversight of payment of non-teaching civil servants. However in the majority of provinces they have become involved in the payment of teacher salaries, insisting on signing off listings before payments are processed.



3.2 Historical development of the teacher salary payment system

The DRC has struggled to form a resilient and legitimate state since it became independent in 1960. The 1980s were particularly difficult for the education sector, with the education budget being dramatically cut (from 25 per cent to 7 per cent of national expenditure between 1982 and 1987) in line with the structural adjustment programme (De Herdt, Titeca and Wagemakers, 2010). Simultaneously, teacher salaries dropped from US\$68 to US\$27 (De Herdt, Titeca and Wagemakers, 2010). During the final years of Mobutu rule, civil servants became accustomed to extremely low salaries and irregular payment, with many adopting coping strategies such as second employment and corruption (Gambino, 2011). This not only affected their performance in their official roles, but also embedded many of the informal practices and inefficiencies in the salary system that persist today.

Much of the current payroll infrastructure, such as SECOPE, was established in the 1980s with the assistance of Belgium Cooperation. However, political resistance to Belgian assistance in the 1990s led to gaps in technical support and capacity development (Verhaghe, 2007). Similarly the DRC's treasury system is largely based on Francophone models from the 1960s.

Following the fall of Mobutu and the establishment of Laurent Kabila as president in 1997, some donors were reluctant and unwilling to re-engage in the DRC, due to the DRC's vast international debt and uncertainty about the change in government (Gambino, 2011). This situation began to change after the assassination of Laurent Kabila in 2001 and the installation of his son Joseph Kabila as president, with subsequent moves towards reconciliation and the signing of a peace accord in 2003. It was with this transition, successful elections and a new constitution in 2006 that aid to the DRC increased and institutional reforms have begun to take place (Gambino, 2011; World Bank, 2007). However, some donors (as well as authorities) remain hesitant about directly supporting teacher salaries until reforms to strengthen the financial management and auditing systems have been put in place in order to minimise the risks of leakages (De Herdt et al., 2010).

The 2004 Mbudi agreement, part of initial reforms and negotiations between the transitional government and teachers' unions (De Herdt et al., 2010), was significant for teacher salaries. The agreement led to the re-financing of the education budget and an increase in teacher salaries (although these still remained close to the poverty line). It also led to an increase in the number of teachers on the government payroll, rising from 142,900 teachers in 2001/02 to 214,200 teachers in 2007/08 (De Herdt et al., 2010). The number of registered schools also rose by nearly two thirds during this period.

The legacy of years of instability in the education sector and lack of capacity within SECOPE have left a backlog of schools and teachers not registered within the system. Whilst there are undoubtedly some 'ghost' teachers within the system, it is also estimated that up to one third of legitimate teachers are not recognised on the official payroll (Verhaghe, 2007). Their salaries are paid either from savings made by not paying teachers who have left the profession but whose names still exist on a payroll, or from school fees (World Bank, 2008).

Initial steps were taken during 2007 to reform the wage system, including measures to improve transparency and predictability of payments (World Bank, 2008). These included adoption of priority action plans and implementation of quarterly programmes to allocate funds to schools, as well as an increase in the education budget (AFDB/OECD, 2008). Reforms to the wage system have been accompanied by a new constitution in 2006 and steps towards decentralisation. Whilst in principle administrative responsibility has been partially devolved to provincial level, in practice many processes remained centralised (World Bank, 2007; Gambino, 2011).



3.3 Cogs in the teacher salary payment system

This section looks at each of the five cogs outlined in Figure 1 above and how well each cog is functioning within the DRC's education system. Where inertia of a particular cog has been identified, any solutions that have been tried and tested to enable movement of the cog are outlined.

3.3.1 Financial management issues

Public financial management (PFM)

A public expenditure tracking survey (PETS) of education expenditure in the DRC showed that teacher salary payment was seldom made by the official deadline of the 20th of every month. Instead delays in excess of two months were common (World Bank, 2008). Delays were largely attributed to the cash-based payment system and inadequately robust controls.

Despite delays, the Public Expenditure Review estimated that over 90 per cent of funds that left the Treasury reached their final destination (World Bank, 2008). However, this figure can be as low as 60 per cent in certain schools and tends to decrease with distance of the school from the provincial office (World Bank, 2008; Verhaghe, 2007). Whilst deductions during the cash process are relatively small, they are also abundant. The PETS estimated that annual losses due to leakages in the salary payment system and corruption more generally amount to between US\$5 million and US\$27 million (World Bank, 2008).

Audit system

A lack of transparency and effective management procedures is pervasive throughout the education sector, not just the salary payment system. For example, a detailed breakdown of the education sector budget is not publicly available (Mokonzi and Kadongo, 2010), making it difficult to evaluate expenditure and the execution of funds.

In principle, accountants can be held responsible for any irregular use of funds but, in practice, weaknesses within the legal system make prosecution of misuse of funds very difficult (Verhaghe, 2007). The teacher salary system has a number of checks throughout the spending chain, commonly known as 'visas'. These confirm the availability of and use of funding. In practice, many of these checks are technical formalities that provide additional layers of approval rather than scrutinising expenditure (Verhaghe, 2007). Similarly monitoring and reporting mechanisms are also weak. For example, headteachers are required to return signed receipts for all salary payments to SECOPE but in practice this seldom happens (World Bank, 2008).

The PETS recommends strengthening the role of parents, teachers' unions and civil society organisations in the monitoring of salary payments (World Bank, 2010).

Banking system

The payment of teacher salaries is still predominantly cash-based, due to limited banking infrastructure beyond urban centres. The cash-based system for paying teacher salaries has implications for the amount of salary received by each teacher and the time it takes for salaries to be received (Boak, 2009).



The PETS revealed that deductions from salary packages are common,² and that whilst a teacher may sign to say they have received their full salary amount, this is seldom the case (World Bank, 2008). Missing and damaged notes from salary packets are the subject of frequent complaints by teachers. Deductions take place at various stages of the payment process, most notably when funds are initially counted and leave the banking system. In addition deductions are routinely made by school network administrators (*gestionnaires*) to finance the transportation costs of delivering salaries (Verhaghe, 2007). Lastly there are significant backwards flows of money, linked to salary top-ups and corruption with pay commissions and public accountants. These deductions have significant implications for the living standards of teachers whose pay is already low, and contribute to the lack of predictability of wage levels.

Recommendations for addressing the issue of deductions and missing notes include (World Bank, 2008, 2010; Verhaghe, 2007):

- the exploration of alternative methods to cash payments, including money transfers to agencies or commercial banks who can then transfer funds to schools or teachers;
- payment using larger bank notes (this will also reduce the transportation costs);
- development of a mechanism to report deductions and any irregularities;
- provision of allowances for transportation costs, thereby halting the practice of deducting these costs from teacher salaries and making *gestionnaires* accountable for these costs.³

In addition, liquidity problems are often seen to contribute to delays in processing teacher salaries, with local central banks being slow to recognise formal transfer orders (Verhaghe, 2007). There are multiple hypotheses as to why this may occur, including that banks may delay ensuring they have sufficient funds, or that military salaries are given higher priority for payment for security reasons. However, this is a structural issue that should be easy to address if the appropriate forward-planning processes are in place. Salaries are regular payments, and with better planning, local branches of the central bank should be able to anticipate demands for cash and place orders for funds in advance.

The cash-based system also brings logistical difficulties as well as delays. Physical transportation of funds can take weeks. It is common for *gestionnaires* to use paymasters (local accountants) who travel to 'pay centres' where they will arrange in advance to meet several headteachers (Verhaghe, 2007). However, these trips need to be financed, with funds deducted from salaries, and require prolonged absence of headteachers from schools. This has implications for school management and teaching. Because of these costs, some remote schools choose to collect several months of salaries at once (Verhaghe, 2007).

3.3.2 Information management systems

Teacher Management Systems/Education Management Information Systems (TMS/EMIS)

There is a lack of accurate data on teacher numbers. Estimates suggest that there are between 350,000 and 450,000 teachers, with just over half of these teaching at primary level (Boak, 2009; Mokonzi and Kadongo, 2010). However, evidence suggests that up to 140,000 teachers are not listed on the official government payroll (Boak, 2009). Plans to address this include a national teacher census. Data collection is managed by provincial SECOPOP offices, based upon school reports. However, they typically have limited capacity to undertake surveys to verify data (Verhaghe, 2007).

² See Annex 2 for a detailed mapping of areas of leakage within the teacher salary payment system, including an indicative assessment of the relative size of these leakages.

³ This concept is not new in the DRC; originally SECOPE allocated a monthly allowance to cover such costs, based on the distance needed to travel etc.



Information management uses a mixture of computerised and paper-based systems, depending on the stakeholders involved and the level of transaction. The Ministry of Budget and Finance has a computerised system which tracks all stages of the expenditure chain. This ensures transparency and more efficient tracking of expenditure. The electronic transfer for information also reduces delays (Verhaghe, 2007). The MEPSP EMIS system was launched in 2007 and established with support from the African Development Bank and UNESCO⁴ (Mokonzi and Kagondo, 2010: 5).

Payroll

Critical to reforms within the teacher payment system is an accurate payroll (World Bank, 2008). Once in place, this can form the foundation of measures to improve auditing and transparency of processes. According to Verhaghe (2007: 45), 'a reliable payroll is therefore a prerequisite for transparent payroll management.'

With regards to the payroll in the DRC, there is a complex division of labour between the MEPSP, Ministry of Budget and Finance and SECOPE. SECOPE retains overall responsibility for the production of payroll listings, which are then physically forwarded to provincial SECOPEP offices. SECOPE's payroll lists are not synchronised with those of the Ministry of Public Services (MPS), who has overall jurisdiction for payment of civil service salaries and holds the budget allocated to SECOPE (World Bank, 2007). Verhaghe (2007) argues that a more transparent, computerised human resource management system including payroll and other staff records would be ideal to manage this information. Pivotal to this is accompanying accountability processes and established procedures of due process to reduce fraud within payroll systems, which are enforceable. Absence of this has led to instances of teachers being fraudulently added onto payroll systems in exchange for money (Verhaghe, 2007).

Evidence suggests that data on staff changes is being collated and reported at local levels, with time spent harmonising school payrolls and official listings. However, this information is not reliably transmitted up the payroll chain. This is partly because capacity within SECOPE is limited, and SECOPE staff have struggled to keep pace with teacher recruitment. However, SECOPE also has limited incentives to update payroll lists, particularly when it comes to adding additional teachers because irrespective of teacher recruitment and attrition, limited budgets that remain unchanged for months constrain the availability of resources with which to pay teachers (Verhaghe, 2007). As a result, newly recruited teachers often receive the salaries of the teachers they replace, rather than being entered on the payroll themselves. In addition, retired teachers are often kept on the payroll so that they continue to receive a salary as a form of pension (Verhaghe, 2007).

In 2007 it was estimated that up to one third of teachers are not recognised on the official payroll (Verhaghe, 2007). Despite significant government efforts to regularise these teachers, it is still the case that many teachers are reliant on school fees for their salary. Lack of accurate payroll is also a key barrier to ensuring strong public financial management and auditing processes, and to engaging donors in supporting teacher salaries.

⁴ Prior to this the MSPE had an operational Teacher Oversight and Payroll Service personnel database for the analysis and collation of data. This was created in 1985 with Belgian assistance, but when support was withdrawn in 1990s there was insufficient technical and human capacity to maintain the database (World Bank, 2010).



With the current process of payments being allocated to school level, there is potential for distortion, as payrolls may be based on teaching posts rather than individual teachers (World Bank, 2007). For example there is no incentive for schools to update SECOPE if a teacher leaves a post; rather, new teachers are unofficially inserted into these posts, or funds are subsumed into the general school budget. This gives the headteacher significant discretionary power on the allocation of these surplus funds. In Bas-Congo, SECOPEP has limited this power by putting in place a local payroll management system. Schools are required to submit monthly payment reports to SECOPEP offices, including details of all outgoing and incoming staff as well as the school's accounts (Verhaghe, 2007). SECOPEP and school networks then have oversight of teaching needs and potential payroll deficits and surpluses.

Examples such as this demonstrate that at a provincial level, complementary payroll systems can be put into effect to justify payroll expenditure in a transparent manner. More broadly, it also indicates the potential for local, sustainable public expenditure management (Verhaghe, 2007).

3.3.3 Resources/funding

Regional disparities in teachers' pay levels are common, with teachers in Kinshasa earning up to three times as much as teachers in other provinces. This inequality in remuneration levels is largely due to a system of salary zones and allowances that top up base-level salaries, with some only being available to teachers based in Kinshasa (Mokonzi and Kadongo, 2010). Whilst this has allowed the government to increase teacher salaries whilst keeping basic salaries (and therefore retirement salaries) low, there are still risks of the wage bill becoming unsustainable with the government providing allowances to appease teachers' demands in the short term, whilst concurrently increasing the number of teachers on the payroll.

De Herdt et al. (2010) argue that donors have indirectly supported the payment of teacher salaries through debt cancellations which allowed the government to increase levels of education expenditure, although this is not necessarily sustainable in the long term. In the meantime, donors initially provided capitation grants to finance school costs, via a World Bank project called PURUS ('Projet d'Urgence de Rehabilitation Urbaine et Social') (De Herdt et al., 2010). Around US\$45 million has been disbursed in this way, channelled through SECOPE. Other forms of donor support have taken place through a multi-donor trust fund, as well as projects to address particular structural issues in the education sector such as EMIS (Boak, 2009).



4 Key challenges

Verhaghe (2007) contends that the most effective approach to improving teacher payment systems is to build upon local capacity and work within the existing system to identify breakage points and address these, rather than identify short-term fixes. With this in mind, the following challenges and lessons learnt have been identified, along with potential solutions to address breakages in the teacher salary payment system.

4.1 Bureaucratic, multi-layered system, creating opportunities for corruption and delay

Corruption is proportional to the opportunities for corrupt activities and the risk and severity of sanctions if caught. Multiple actors and layers of approval increase the opportunities for corruption and bureaucratic systems make it more difficult to detect. To combat this, roles and responsibilities need to be more clearly defined, and the number of transactions need to be kept at a minimally efficient level (Verhaghe, 2007).

Overly bureaucratic processes, such as insistence of multiple copies of 'visas' signed by several organisations can lead to delays, especially as individuals are often unavailable to sign listings (Verhaghe, 2007). It has also been reported that this has led to bypassing of protocol, with credit managers issuing cheques before signed listings have been received in an attempt to get payments to teachers when there have been excessive bureaucratic delays (Verhaghe, 2007). Whilst well intentioned, this opens up space for corruption and issues for auditing.

Awareness of the excessive bureaucracy has led to some efforts to address it. For example, Boak (2009) notes increased use of ICT-based systems and the development of an EMIS system supported by donors. Similarly, Verhaghe (2007) highlights the importance and feasibility of a centrally-based computer system with reliable, secure internet connections to provincial offices, so that provincial SECOPEP offices can directly update listings.

Steps have also been taken towards decentralisation to improve local responsiveness to problems, remove unnecessary layers of bureaucracy, and to encourage more direct accountability and transparency in processes. However, despite constitutional provisions for decentralisation, in practice some provincial governments still struggle to perform basic governance tasks and administrative and managerial capacity within provincial education structures is inadequate (Boak, 2009; Gambino, 2011).



4.2 Limited role, capacity and authority of SECOPEP

As the central entity in teacher management, SECOPE and provincial SECOPEP offices should have a central role in the teacher payment process. Boak (2009) contends that SECOPE is key to improving the resilience and effectiveness of the teacher salary payment, particularly with regard to their management and governance role. However, SECOPEP's role is often marginalised and limited to administrative functions (e.g. providing listings)⁵ without oversight of the budget. Additionally, local pay commissions (who are technically not responsible for teacher payments) often work in parallel to SECOPEP, adding an unnecessary layer of bureaucracy (Verhaghe, 2007). This restricts the extent to which SECOPEP can adopt a central leadership role in the processing of payroll and effectively regulate and govern the provincial payment of teachers. SECOPEP also needs to be empowered to take responsibility for maintaining a clean and accurate payroll system, which is needed to provide a secure foundation for any salary payment system.

There are exceptions to this, as seen in the example of Bas-Congo where SECOPEP has established a strong system of school reporting, discussed above. However, the overall capacity of SECOPEP needs to be improved to allow them to take on these management roles, and they will need central support.

4.3 Lack of accountability at local levels, particularly for public accountants

Verhaghe (2007) found that unaccountable individual behaviour was often behind delays in the disbursement of payments; for example public accountants not withdrawing funds as soon as they become available or choosing not to travel inland on a regular basis. Drawing upon anecdotal evidence collected as part of his research, he suggests that there is:

'... a deep, underlying malaise in the current chain of accountability relationships. Organizational providers (such as bank managers, government officials etc) seem indeed to be almost unaware of their individual "lines of responsibility" toward their fellow citizens.' (Verhaghe, 2007: 28)

Similarly, Greeley (2007: 14) notes a 'culture of obligation to the servants of the state rather than the other way around.' To combat this, codes of conduct need to be developed for roles and to be enforceable through disciplinary action (Verhaghe, 2007).

Further evidence collected by Verhaghe (2007) suggests that corrupt practices are widespread and entrenched, with problems becoming more pronounced in rural and remote areas. Moreover, the scope for bringing charges against public accountants is limited.

⁵ In Goma, even this process is undertaken by gestionnaires, who provide listings directly to the Budget Office.



The teacher salary system in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC)

In 2001, the Governor of Katanga decided to take direct action against corruption among public accountants and, as part of a reform campaign, re-established SECOPEP in a more direct management role. Now the public accountant has to authorise the payment, but it is SECOPEP who withdraws the funds and dispatches the salaries to gestionnaires to disburse to schools. This initiative has reportedly reduced instances of corruption and led to more secure payments to teachers (Verhaghe, 2007).

Donors, particularly DFID, have been keen to support an audit of the teacher payment system to identify such examples of good practice and areas for reform prior to engaging to directly support teacher salaries (De Herdt et al., 2010).



5 Conclusion

'Effective and sustainable teacher payroll expenditure is built on [the] following load-bearing walls: doable, replicable and reliable.' (Verhaghe, 2007: 55)

The DRC's teacher salary payment system is plagued by problems within the 'cogs', notably a lack of clear processes for auditing and public financial management and, within payroll, a lack of knowledge about the precise number of teachers. These problems have resultant effects on other cogs and how they interact, causing overall weaknesses in the ability of the government to successfully manage and govern the teacher payment system.

Given the weaknesses of existing teacher payment systems, donors have struggled to identify the most appropriate mechanism to engage and support the payment of teacher salaries. Recent initiatives by donors have taken steps towards ensuring the necessary structural factors are in place to support teacher salaries. They have stipulated school mapping, a teacher census and reform processes to teacher payment mechanisms following a full audit of the system, as necessary before directly supporting salaries, and in the interim have committed to financially support these stepping stone requirements (De Herdt et al., 2010; Greeley, 2007). Generally, donor consensus has been that the DRC is not yet eligible for budget support, so a multi-donor trust fund has been established, which is shadow-aligned with government systems and is seen to have the potential to support teacher salaries in the future (Boak, 2009).

The lack of accurate data on the number of teachers is perceived to be inhibitive to progress in broader governance reforms to the teacher payment system, particularly with the large number of teachers recruited during the period of conflict who have not been registered on the payroll (Boak, 2009; Verhaghe, 2007; De Herdt et al., 2010). Without a secure evidence base and reliable listings against which individuals can be held to account for the management of funds, progress to institute reform is perceived to be limited. Thus payroll has often been highlighted as a key starting point for bringing about governance reforms. Evidence reported by Verhaghe (2007) on the technicalities of the teacher payment system, indicates small ways in which progress can be made in the interim, including establishment of codes of conduct, simplification of payroll places and, where possible, the use of technology to facilitate information sharing as well as electronic transfer of funds.

The challenges to establishing and maintaining an effective teacher payment system in such a geographically vast country are immense. However, isolated incidents of innovative practice at provincial levels and steps centrally to work towards reform offer potential for replication in the future.

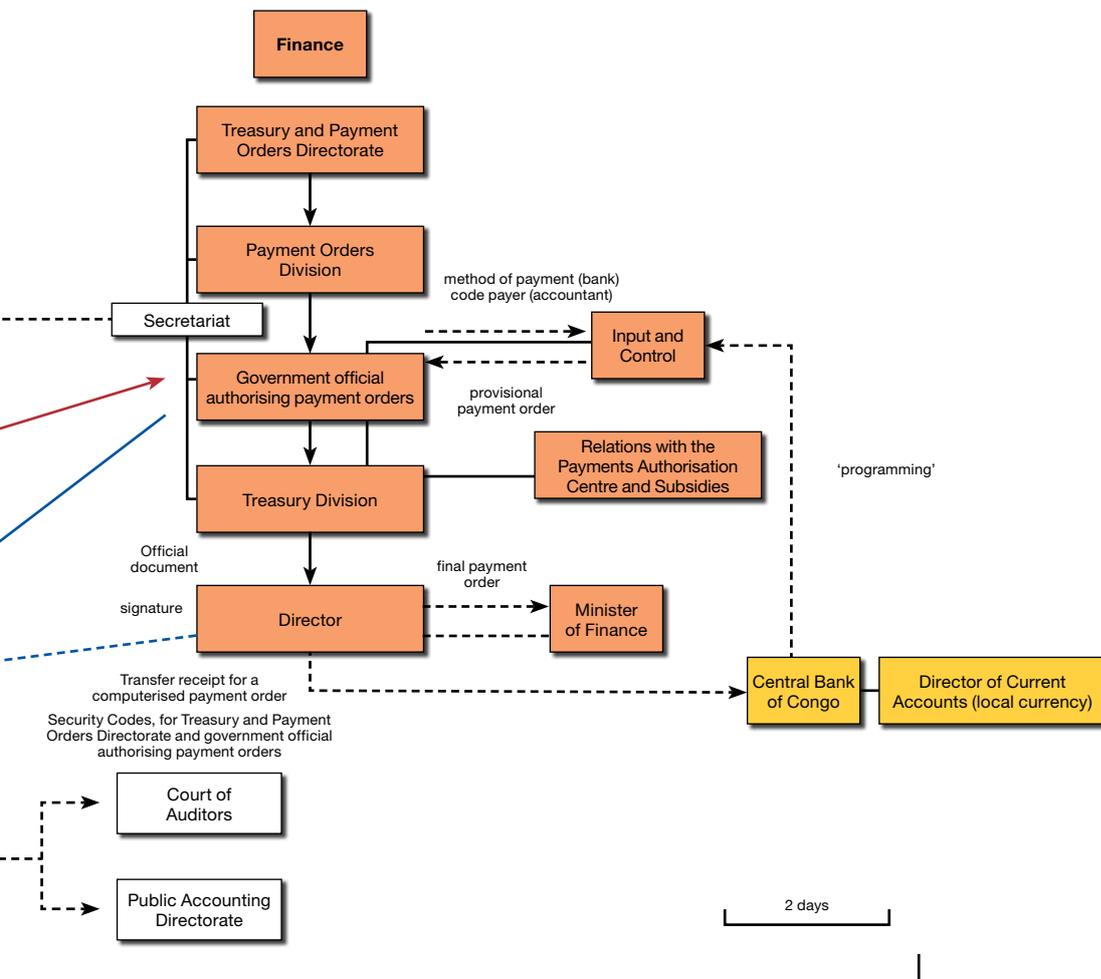


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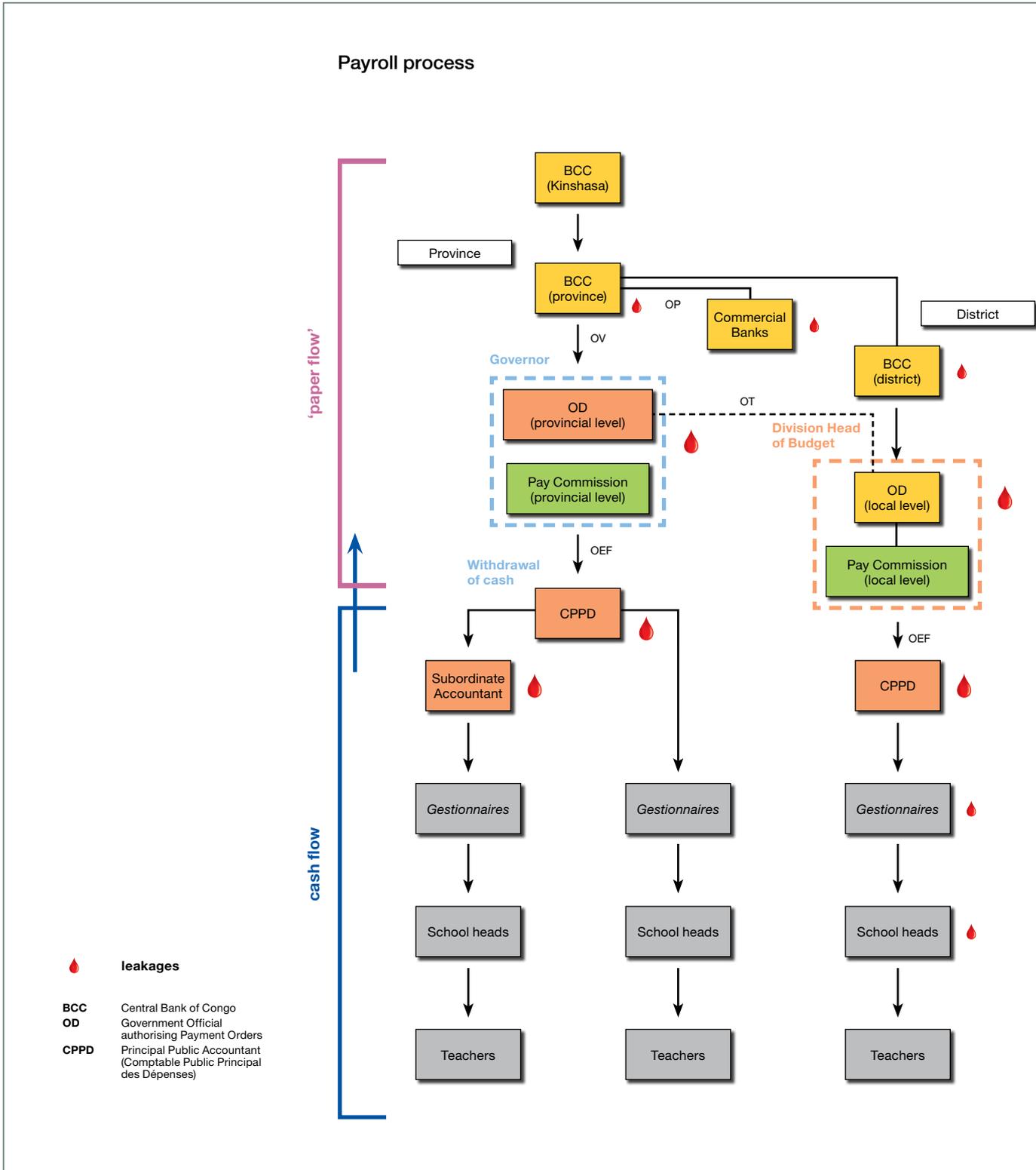


Payment Order and Payment





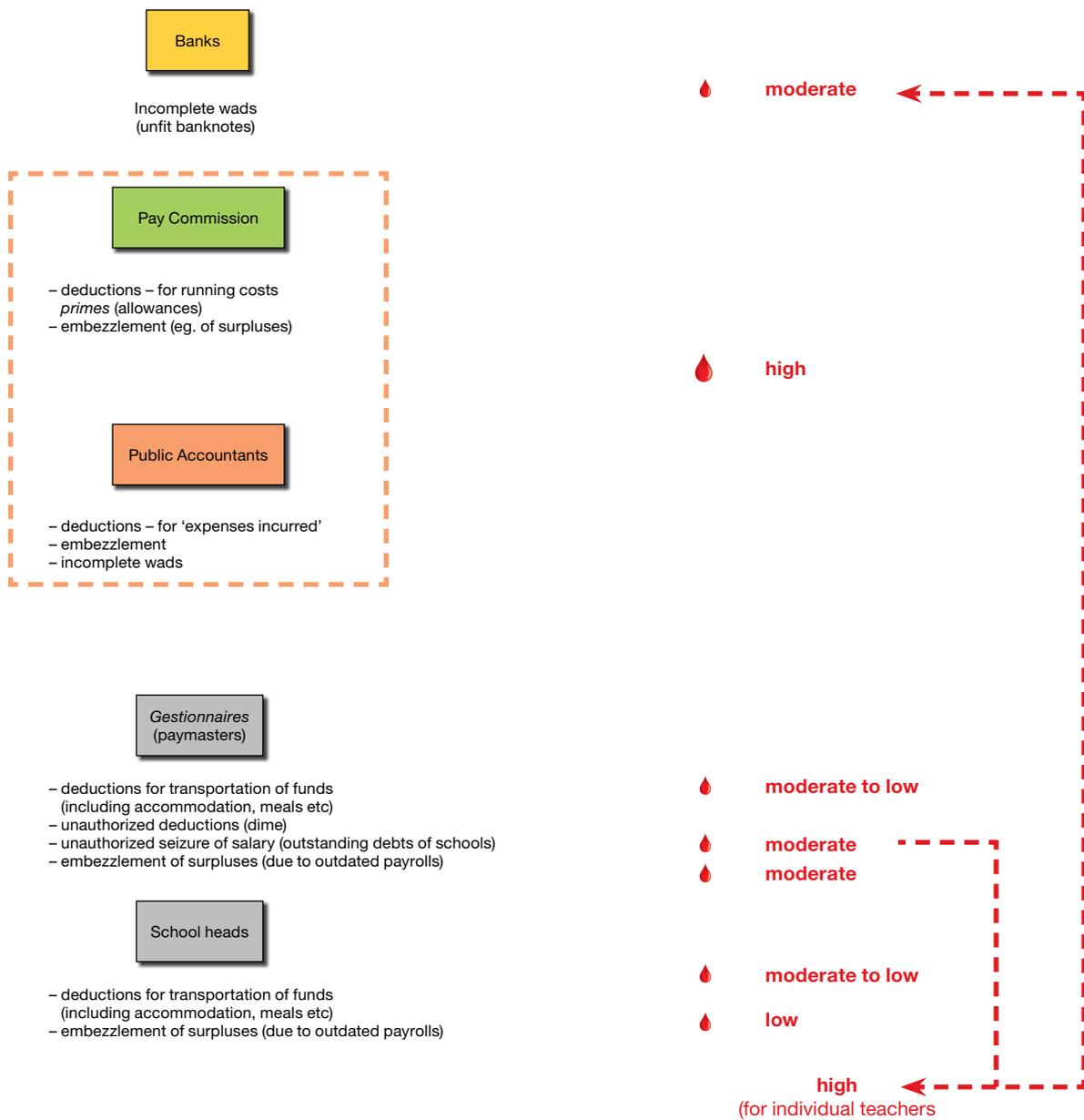
Annex 2: Teacher Payroll Expenditure: Flow of Funds and Leakage Identification [Source: Verhaghe, 2007]





Leakages

Risk (in terms of loss of money)





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