

1.3 The Teaching Service in Sierra Leone

A brief description of the teaching service in Sierra Leone.

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Facts and figures on schools, teachers and pupils in Sierra Leone

The following information is taken from the School Census 2019. The census report was still in draft at time of writing (March 2020) therefore the figures may be subject to change. However, they provide a good overall picture of the entire sector (private and public), with more than 11,000 schools, 83,000 teachers, and 2.6 million school children.

The Teaching Service Commission is responsible for teachers in approved (government or government assisted schools) who are on the government payroll. In 2019, there were 46,436 teachers registered by the TSC.

Teachers in unapproved schools may be registered with TSC if they hold relevant teacher qualifications. All teachers and schools in both the private and public sector must adhere to general rules.

Total Schools in Sierra Leone

| Category | | Count |
|-----------------|------------|-------|
| Primary | Government | 2,952 |
| | Private | 1,157 |
| Total Primary | | 4,109 |
| Secondary | Government | 3,476 |
| | Private | 1,633 |
| Total Secondary | | 5,109 |
| Total Schools | | 9,218 |

The Government owns little more than 16% of schools in Sierra Leone. The majority of schools are mission schools, and there are large numbers of community and private schools. Approximately 60% of schools are approved, meaning they are government or government assisted schools – either financially or in other ways . Not all teachers in approved schools are on the government payroll.

For a school to be approved, it must meet certain criteria in terms of the number of qualified teachers, facilities, etc. While the approval of schools is a ministerial responsibility, the teaching service must ensure the majority of teachers are qualified to deliver teaching of a high professional standard through its recruitment and deployment practices, school leadership and through provision of professional development.

Total Approved and Unapproved Schools

| | Approved | Unapproved |
|--------------|-----------|------------|
| Pre-primary | 728,030 | |
| Primary | 702,447 | |
| J. Secondary | 1,125,508 | |
| S. Secondary | 440,183 | |
| Total | 3,000,168 | |

Total Female and Male Teachers in Sierra Leone

| | Female | Male | Total |
|--------------|-----------|------|-------|
| Pre-primary | 4,878,668 | 856 | |
| Primary | 4,878,668 | 738 | |
| J. Secondary | 3,157,388 | | |
| S. Secondary | 8,970,841 | | |

| | | | | | | | | |
|-----------|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 3,794,903 | 3 | 7 | 9 | 4 | 9 | 0 | 3 | 3 |
|-----------|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|

NB: the figures above refer to teachers across all schools, including government, community, Mission and private.

There are disproportionate numbers of female and male teachers, with far more male teachers at all levels except pre-primary. The discrepancy increases at each higher level in the school system and peaks in senior secondary schools with approximately 11 times more male than female teachers. It is an important task of HR to redress the imbalance.

Teachers by Qualification

| | | | | | | | | |
|-----------|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 3,794,903 | 3 | 7 | 9 | 4 | 9 | 0 | 3 | 3 |
| 1,103,556 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 3 | 5 | 5 | 6 | |
| 510,755 | 5 | 1 | 0 | 7 | 5 | 5 | | |
| 151,888 | 1 | 5 | 1 | 8 | 8 | 8 | | |
| 602,841 | 6 | 0 | 2 | 8 | 4 | 1 | | |
| 896,933 | 8 | 9 | 6 | 9 | 3 | 3 | | |
| Secondary | | | | | | | | |

NB: the figures above refer to teachers across all schools, including government, community, Mission and private.

Nearly a third of all teachers are un-qualified and should either be replaced or become qualified over the next couple of years. Teachers in secondary schools are generally well qualified with many degree holders but there are still considerable numbers of unqualified teachers at this level.

In primary schools nearly 2 out of every 3 teachers are unqualified.

NB: Some teachers who are considered to be unqualified may be partially educated in teaching, have valuable teaching experience, or have an education that does not directly qualify them for teaching, but is useful.

Girls and Boys School Enrolment

| | Girls | Boys | Total | Total pupils in approved schools |
|-------------|---------|---------|-----------|----------------------------------|
| Pre-primary | 66,752 | 60,416 | 127,168 | 59,534 |
| Primary | 896,191 | 874,177 | 1,770,368 | 1,372,356 |

| | | | | |
|---------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|
| J. Secondary | 226,159 | 225,526 | 451,685 | 386,027 |
| S. Secondary | 147,696 | 157,389 | 305,085 | 273,164 |
| Total | 1,336,798 | 1,317,508 | 2,654,306 | 2,091,081 |

NB: the figures above refer to pupils across all schools, including government, community, Mission and private.

School children make up a considerable proportion of Sierra Leone's population and is expected to increase in the foreseeable future. The Government's policy of free, compulsory education has created a growing demand for qualified teachers. Forecasting future demand of teachers is an important role of HR and impacts on the planning, capacity and resources of Teacher Training Colleges (TTCs).

The gender balance among pupils is improving, with more girls than boys attending primary school, and almost equal numbers in junior secondary school. The discrepancy in senior secondary school is small, with around 10,000 more boys than girls. This trend is likely to affect tertiary education in the near future, including the output of qualified teacher candidates from TTCs. It is important to promote the teaching profession to women.

This manual focusses on Government and Government-assisted schools, and teachers who are approved, registered in the teacher records database and on the government payroll.

Policies and Regulations

The human resource management of teachers in Sierra Leone is governed by the policies and regulations contained in the below documents. A small number of HR functions are guided by other legally valid documents, which are noted under specific sub-sections of the manual.

- Education Act, Sierra Leone Gazette, 2004
- Teaching Service Commission Act, 2011
- Professional Standards for Teachers and School Leaders in Sierra Leone, TSC, 2017
- National Teacher Policy for Sierra Leone, TSC, 2019
- Code of Conduct for Teachers and other Education Personnel in Sierra Leone, TSC, 2019.

These documents are available at www.tsc.gov.sl

Key Organisations

The Education Act, 2004 details the mandates, key responsibilities and composition of educational institutions in Sierra Leone.

The Teaching Service Commission

The Teaching Service Commission (TSC) has overall responsibility for the human resource management of teachers and school leaders in Sierra Leone. Its Mission is to:

“ensure adequate, professionally qualified, motivated and disciplined teaching staff in all public, basic, secondary and technical and vocational schools for the successful implementation of national education policies, plans and programmes.”

The TSC has four departments:

- Teacher Management: responsible for recruitment, promotion, transfer, retirement, leave, separation from service, and other fundamental teacher personnel management tasks.
- Teacher Registration and Licensing: responsible for the registration of teachers, teacher records, teacher database and teacher licensing.
- Teacher Development and Performance: responsible for overseeing teacher qualifications, professional standards, induction and orientation of new teachers, the continued professional development of teachers and school leaders, and managing teacher performance.
- Teacher - Employer Relations: is responsible for defining and monitoring rights and obligations in relation to teachers and their employers, upholding the Code of Ethics, the condition of service for teachers, and for issues such as equal opportunities, safety and health and work environment.

The establishment and mandate of the TSC is described in the *Teaching Service Commission Act of 2011*.

TSC District Offices

TSC has an office in each of Sierra Leone's 16 districts. The offices are staffed by a Deputy Director (DD) and a District Officer (DO). The TSC District Offices (TSC-DOs) cooperate closely with District Education Offices (DEOs) (see Ministry of Basic and Senior Secondary Education below) and are located next to each other. Most HR matters are initially addressed to district offices before they are processed centrally.

The TSC-DO coordinates, advises and supervises school leaders, teachers and others with HR responsibilities. All HR correspondence and processes go through them. The offices are engaged in most HR activities in the district, including recruitment, promotion, transfers and payroll, coordination of training activities and collaboration with education institutions and partners and serve as a liaison between schools and TSC-HQ. With the DEO and school leaders, TSC-DOs engage in teacher supervision and quality assurance, and cooperate with the Sierra Leone Teachers' Union on matters of HR and teacher training. TSC-DOs serve as a resource centre for this HR Manual and other online HR services.

Ministry of Basic and Senior Secondary Education

The Ministry of Basic and Senior Secondary Education (MBSSE) is responsible for legislation and regulations relating to primary and secondary education. It is also responsible for schools, including overall planning, budgeting and information management, school infrastructure, supervision and quality assurance, curriculum and education materials, approval and certification of new schools, and other core school and education sector issues. The MBSSE operates through DEOs in the districts.

The Ministry's role in teacher HR management includes:

- Final signing of a new teacher's employment
- Final approval of a teacher's termination of service
- Appointment of school leaders.

District Education Offices

Within the DEO, District Deputy Directors have overall oversight and responsibility for educational activities in the district.

Under the DEO, school inspectors and school supervisors are responsible for school inspection, supervision and quality assurance of all schools in the district, including the quality of teaching, which is a shared responsibility with TSC-DO. The DEO also deals with complaints and queries from school leaders and teachers.

Teacher Training Colleges & Universities

Teacher Training Colleges (TTCs) are under the Ministry of Technical and Higher Education (MTHE) and are the main supplier of qualified teachers in the education service. They ensure an adequate number of qualified teachers and deliver high teaching standards. TTCs provide:

- Tertiary pre-service teacher education
- Awards for Teacher Certificate (TC), Higher Teacher Certificate (HTC) Primary and Secondary, Bachelor, Master, and Ph.D. Degrees in Education, and Post-Graduate Diploma in Education
- In-service teacher training and online accredited courses for teachers and un-qualified teachers seeking recognised qualifications
- Provision of in-service teacher training
- Research in the field of Education.

For more information about TTCs go to [Teacher Education](#).

In addition to TTCs, Universities offer subject-specific Bachelor and Master Degrees in Science, the Arts and Social Studies, which, with a Post-Graduate Diploma in Education acquired from a TTC, qualifies a graduate for a teaching position.

Accountant General's Office, Ministry of Finance

The Accountant General's Office processes and pays teacher salaries through the teachers' local bank accounts.

Sierra Leone Teachers' Union

The Sierra Leone Teachers' Union (SLTU) is an advocating body for teachers and negotiates with

government on issues such as teacher-employee relations, teacher salary, working conditions, welfare, safety and health, education and professional development, and gender/equity. It also provides in-service teacher training. The SLTU works closely with TSC and is represented at national, regional, district and school level.

District Councils and Education Committees

The 2004 Education Act devolved education responsibilities to districts. The process is partially complete. The Education Chairperson on the Council is elected.

The Education Committee has a broad spectrum of functions and is engaged in basic and secondary education matters in the district. The Committee is not engaged in tertiary education. Essential responsibilities include:

- Involved in recruitment of new teachers and sign ED Forms
- Coordinate education activities in the district
- Prepare annual and quarterly education plans and budgets.

School Management Committees

As stipulated in the Education Act, 2004, each primary school has a School Management Committee (SMC) as part of its overall management structure. The committee has eight members: Chairperson (elected among the members); Head Teacher, who acts as Secretary to the Committee; Treasurer; the Councillor of the ward; the town/village Chief and two or three parents.

Members meet before the school year starts, at least once during each term, at the end of each school year, and on an ad-hoc basis if there are matters to address. The Committee has overall responsibility for the smooth running and management of the school including:

- Supervises the functioning of the school and visits on a regular basis.
- Checks and signs the school budget
- Checks teacher attendance and punctuality
- Promotes teacher welfare
- Takes an active role in the recruitment process, including receiving the shortlist, inviting candidates for interview, sitting on the interview panel and selecting the final candidate
- Recommends teachers for promotion
- Settles disputes

- Engages in disciplinary action.

Board of Governors

Every Secondary School has a Board of Governors (BoG). The Board has 12 members: four proprietor nominees; one selected by the old student association; the Minister of Education nominates five members and the local authority one member. The School Principal acts as Secretary to the Board. The Minister appoints the Chair of the board.

The Board of Governors shares similar responsibilities to School Management Committees in primary schools.

Ward Education Committee

A Ward comprises a cluster of villages. Ward Education Committee (WEC) members include a representative from each political party, the Councillor of the Ward and representatives of the Conference of Principals (an organisation representing principles in secondary schools), SLTU, National Council of Head Teachers, and parents.

The WEC is purely supervisory. It monitors the performance of schools and the attendance, punctuality, conduct, etc. of teachers.

District Quality Assurance Committees

Each district has a Quality Assurance Committee, which operates under the MBSSE and provides assistance in quality assurance of schools within the district. Committee members comprise:

- School supervisor
- TSC District staff member
- Conference of Principals representative
- Head Teachers' Council representative
- SLTU representative
- District Council Education Committee representative
- Teacher representative.

Disciplinary Committee

Each school has a Disciplinary Committee composed of teachers within the school who select a Committee Chairman and other members. Member numbers vary.