

EDUCATIONAL ADMINISTRATION AND MANAGEMENT IN TIMOR LESTE: LANGUAGE AND CAPACITY BUILDING CHALLENGES IN A POST-CONFLICT CONTEXT

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Abstract

Purpose – The aim of this paper is to analyse the relationship between a national language policy that strongly favours Portuguese and Tetun over Bahasa Indonesian and English, and the establishment and administration of the Inspectorate of the Ministry of Education in Timor Leste.

Design/methodology/approach – The author was embedded in the Inspectorate between January and June 2009 to assist with capacity building. During this period he conducted ethnographic analysis of the administration of two of the largest regions prior to helping develop the *School Inspector's Manual* and a strategic plan and budget for the Inspectorate. This report was derived from those experiences.

Findings – The Inspectorate in the Ministry of Education, led by an Inspector General, has a symbiotic relationship with what is termed in this paper as the 'Schools Directorate' (since it does not yet have a formal organisational title) led by a Director General. Although the Inspectorate is required to improve the quality and accountability of all services provided by the 'Schools Directorate', the close symbiosis encouraged between the sister bureaucracies by the Minister of Education has resulted in serious goal displacement in both organisations, degrees of confusion and paralysis in implementation. Four major reasons are identified. The Minister co-manages the 'Schools Directorate' and the Inspectorate as a Chief Executive Officer. Formal communications in the Ministry are conducted in Portuguese, although few are competent in this language. Regional Directorates and Regional Inspectorates are required to collaborate closely in review and development planning, while the activities of the latter are funded and administered by the former. Finally, the cultural norms of conflict-avoidance in a post-conflict context have become so pervasive that performance management in the Ministry has been neutralised by political patronage, organisational ambiguity, scarce resources and corruption.

Research limitations/implications – The research reported is limited by the duration of the fieldwork, the priority given to contracted tasks, such as the development of the *School Inspector's Manual*, and the unique nature of Timor Leste, and the relatively small size of its education system. Generalization is therefore limited to Timor Leste, and then only with caution, given the dearth of systematic research in one of the newest countries in the world.

Practical implications – The findings imply the need for a review of the national language policy with a view to a more effective and efficient use of scarce resources and organisational science in the education system. There also needs to be a clearer distinction between policy making and policy implementation in the Minister's Office and more systematic capacity building in strategic leadership, planning and budgeting in the 'Schools Directorate' and in the Inspectorate. Three critical issues are the need for a more practical and inclusionary

language policy, a compensation policy that serves as an incentive regime, and the need to confront corruption from the highest levels.

Originality/value – Timor Leste was established as country in 1999 when the Indonesians relinquished sovereignty and their departing military units and associated militias left most of the educational infrastructure in ruins. Civil disorder flared again in 2006 and the Government invited international military and reconstruction aid agencies in to restore order and reinvigorate development. The Inspectorate was established by law in 2008 to improve the quality and accountability of the school education system. This paper therefore reports baseline research into the development of the Ministry of Education and the Inspectorate.

Keywords System development, system leadership, quality, accountability, language policy, Inspectorate, investigations, compensation, corruption

Paper type Research report

Introduction

The complex social-political history of Timor Leste is signalled by the large number of languages in use and their functions in Timorese society (Klinken, 2003, p. xiii) and the national language policy in the Constitution where Tetun and Portuguese are recognised as ‘official languages’ while Bahasa Indonesian and English are recognised as ‘working languages.’

Most people, especially those in rural areas, speak their own ethnic language at home. Mambae and Tokodede, for example, are related to Tetun and belong to the Austronesian language group of the hunter gatherers that first arrived about 13,000 years ago (Wheeler, 2004, p. 20). Others, however, such as Bunak and Makasse, do not belong to this group and arrived with agriculturalists that migrated from Asia about 2000 BC. Hence, while Tetun is spoken by most Timorese, in most districts, and is regarded as the *lingua franca*, there are exceptions, such as in Los Palos in the far east, and in Oecussi, the East Timorese exclave in West Timor.

A related consequence of tribal histories is continuing rivalry over resources between those from the East and those from the West in Timor Leste. By about 1500 AD the country was divided into many small kingdoms engaged in numerous boundary and resource conflicts. The Dawan (Atoni) people were probably the largest tribe in western Timor but were subdivided into many small kingdoms. Hence, when the Tetun (Belu) people settled into the fertile central areas in the 14th Century, they were able to push the Darwan kingdoms westward, expand the boundaries of their own four kingdoms, and then encroached further into East Timor. This ancient East-West fault line in Timor Leste politics surfaced again in 2006 when soldiers from western regions alleged discrimination over promotions and discipline, and this claim helped destabilise the internal security of the country (Rosser, 2009).

The many languages in use also indicate periods of colonisation and resistance. The Portuguese and the Dutch competed for control of the island of Timor from about 1568 for 300 years, largely by exploiting strategic alliances with local kingdoms, until they finally subdivided Timor in 1916. Their main interest was not development but coffee. Although the Portuguese built a few churches and forts, they constructed relatively few roads or bridges.

The Catholic Church gained a strong foothold in all areas and built many primary schools and a small number of relatively high quality regional secondary schools. The Church has remained very conservative and its teachings today contribute to one of the highest national birth rates in the world, effectively neutralising many health, welfare and social development policies.

The authority of the Portuguese rulers, however, was weak outside of regional centres and often effectively resisted by the *liurai*, the traditional Timorese rulers. Traditional beliefs and practices persist to this day, including instances of murder intended to curtail witchcraft (Wright, 2009), although these norms are increasingly contested (Herriman, 2009) and challenging the call made by the first President (Gusmao, 2005) to integrate traditional law with modern justice.

The capacity to resist imposed change was further honed last century. The Portuguese introduced forced labour and taxes in 1910 to improve the productivity of their coffee estates but were forced to abandon these coercive practices in 1916. Resistance was widely practiced during the Japanese occupation from 1942 to 1945, with the result that Timorese villagers suffered badly for their support of an Australian guerrilla force. Resistance has since been raised to the status of a national trait in Timor Leste, as exemplified by Xanana Gusmao, guerrilla leader and first president (Niner, 2000). And although the Portuguese returned after WW2, their neglect of Timor Leste finally ended in 1974 when economic and political crises in Portugal forced it to give up its colonies, and the Indonesians took the opportunity to invade and annexe a long alienated territory deep within its massive archipelago.

Portuguese was therefore the first language of colonisation for Timor Leste, that is, the language of government, education and the Catholic Church for the 400 years prior to the Indonesian period of rule from 1975 to 1999. What has surprised many is that it has since been reintroduced as the basic language of education starting from the lower grades of primary schooling. Teachers' explanations may be in Tetun, and many schools still hold on to Indonesian textbooks, most of the new textbooks are in Portuguese. While discussions may be in Bahasa and Tetun, formal documentation in the Ministry and executive meetings are all held in Portuguese, effectively excluding many, especially women. The status differentials and inefficiencies created by the current language practices are widely evident in the Ministry and defy wider public use and common sense.

A recent stratified sample of 496 household heads interviewed systematically in four sub-districts in Bobonaro and two sub-districts in each of Ermera and Liquica (Williams, 2009) showed that the current policy struggles against common usage. Table 1 summaries the fluency levels self-reported in the designated 'official languages' and, in Table 2, fluency in the two 'working languages'.

Insert Table 1 and Table 2 about here

Substantial degrees of resistance to the language policy were regularly encountered in the course of fieldwork, albeit opportunistically. Children commonly described Portuguese as "too hard" and took every opportunity to practice their English. Teachers conducting

Portuguese classes using Tetun as the medium of instruction would quickly make a popular switch into an English lesson whenever a visitor was discovered to speak English. Parents schooled in Indonesian indicated that Portuguese was far less useful as a trading language than Bahasa, and not as 'international' as English given the imminent arrival of the Internet and the opportunities offered in Australia. School directors and teachers regularly explained in Tetun, Bahasa and English that they resented attending mandatory professional development workshops in Portuguese after school hours. They commonly described the current language policy as elitist and as counter-productive; fluency in Portuguese bestowed major employment advantages in Government Departments in Dili but undermined schools by enabling job switching from teaching. Younger and opposition politicians schooled locally in Indonesian questioned the legitimacy of government when the authoritative versions of laws were those written in a minority foreign language, despite the availability of translations, and proposed laws being debated in Parliament in Portuguese. It was interesting that the *School Inspectors' Manual* Taskforce and all members of the Inspectorate assisting with drafting content all worked assiduously to an unspoken and unwritten rule; replace any Portuguese words with Tetun.

Ironically, Portuguese became the language of resistance during the Indonesian occupation. Hence, the main reason for the Portuguese language policy today is that many of the current political leaders, almost all men, were educated during the Portuguese colonial era and spent most of the Indonesian occupation in Portuguese possessions such as Mozambique. When they were returned to power in the post-1999 period, these men embedded the new language policy in the Constitution and promoted a unique brand of nationalism that stressed Portuguese cultural values and the use of Portuguese language as a marker of national identity.

Not only have these efforts proved almost futile, this focus of expenditure and foreign aid has been described as being at direct cost to the development of a national education system that delivers the knowledge and skills needed to advance the prosperity of the people (Rosser, 2009). However, given the blunt intransigence of the current Government and Minister of Education regarding any change in the priorities that attend the national language policy, it appears that a combination of inter-generational politics and financial difficulties in Timor Leste may eventually lead to a modification of the current policy.

Indonesian is the second language of colonisation. It is also the language that most East Timorese have been educated in, the language of government and commerce for 24 years, and the language that most still prefer to write in. While the brutality of the invasion in 1975, and the occupation and the withdrawal by Indonesian troops in 1999, is part of the living memory of most East Timorese (Dunn, 2003), so are their memories of the extensive construction of roads, bridges, schools and scholarships to Indonesian universities during the occupation (McGuinn, 1998).

There also appears to be a tolerant understanding of the three major political blunders that occurred in 1999. No one expected the Indonesians to offer the East Timorese a referendum. The Indonesians did not expect the massive rebuttal by the East Timorese. No one anticipated the resulting chaos (Greenlees & Garran, 2002). And although the behaviour of some Indonesian regiments and the militias they sponsored will never be forgotten or forgiven, there is very little resentment in Timor Leste today towards Indonesians, or to their

language. One indicator is that the land border is open and goods flow freely. Another is that one of the most popular annual Timorese cultural festivals is when Timor Leste plays West Timor at football for bragging rights.

English has played a major role in government since 1999. It was the language of the Commission that managed the referendum in August 1999, the UN mission that managed East Timor's transition to full independence in May 2002, and the UN mission that returned in 2006 when internal factionalism undermined the Government's capacity to maintain internal security. Alongside Tetun, the *lingua franca*, English appears to be emerging as the second language of choice of many young Timorese in Dili. The challenge remains for primary teachers wishing to comply with the national policy of introducing Portuguese 'bottom up' when they and their students have limited access to formal language instruction. Classroom video footage has shown that they unconsciously switch codes extensively, including local ethnic languages, to check that learning has occurred (Quinn, 2008).

In sum, the major problems in education since independence (Beck, 2008a, pp. 6-9) include the absence of a common language to teach teachers with and the lack of teaching resources in any language. Other major challenges are the poor quality of education in terms of teacher capability, teacher qualifications and the curricula. There is high absenteeism of teachers and students, high attrition rates, high repetition rates, high adult illiteracy, a gender imbalance with only 30% of teachers in primary schools being women, poor classroom facilities, teacher: student ratios typically about 1:40, and about one third of the population being of school age. It has been estimated that the system needs 140-280 newly trained primary teachers per year, 100-170 newly trained pre-secondary teachers per year and 90-240 newly trained secondary teachers per year, until 2020 (Romiszowski, 2005). The actual numbers enrolling in the early years of the primary school teacher training course at Baucau has been about 50 (Beck, 2008b) and has had to rely on imported expertise (Connell, 2008).

The struggle to develop the system has also involved the National Council for Timorese Resistance (CNRT) attempting to coordinate the contributions of international aid agencies, as well as "enforcing tight deadlines to coordinate school and warehouse rehabilitation; rebuild the Ministry; provide furniture, textbooks and school supplies; recruit teachers, ministry and district office staff; to reopen schools, [which] left no time for sector-wide planning and capacity building with Timorese colleagues." (Supit, 2008, p. 20). The Inspectorate was established in this context in 2008, with 65 School Inspectors directed to sustain the quality and accountability of between 20 and 30 schools each, some so remote they took all day to reach by motorbike and on foot.

Creating a Ministry and an Inspectorate

A three-step legal process was used to create the Ministry and the Inspectorate. Section 59 of the *Constitution*¹ (RDTL, 2002) determined that;

1. The State shall recognise and guarantee that every citizen has the right to education and culture, and it is incumbent upon it to promote the establishment of

¹ English translations of the Constitution and laws enacted by the National Parliament and the Government since the restoration of independence on 20 May 2002 are available at http://www.eastimorlawjournal.org/East_Timor_National_Parliament_Laws/Index.html

a public system of universal and compulsory basic education that is free of charge in accordance with its possibilities and in conformity with the law.

2. Everyone has the right to equal opportunities for education and vocational training.
3. The State shall recognise and supervise private and co-operative education.
4. The State should ensure the access of every citizen, in accordance to their abilities, to the highest levels of education, scientific research and artistic creativity.
5. Everyone has the right to cultural enjoyment and creativity and the duty to preserve, protect and value cultural heritage.

The Decree-Law no. 2/2008 dated 16 January 2008 determined that the Ministry of Education is to be “the central body of the Government responsible for the design, execution, coordination and evaluation of the policies defined and approved by the Council of Ministers for the areas of education and culture, as well as the areas of science and technology.” (p. 1) Article 24(1) of the same Decree-Law gave the Minister the power to approve, by way of a specific ministerial diploma, regulations for the structures of its central services.

Hence, Ministerial Diploma No. 1/2008, published 15 May 2008, widely known as ‘the Organic Law of the Inspectorate’, defined the Inspectorate in Section 1 as a “central service of the Education Ministry, having technical and administrative autonomy, with responsibilities for supporting, issuing instructions and inspecting the areas of pedagogic methods, administration and finances of the educational system.”

The vision of the Inspectorate is that learners of all ages in Timor Leste will have the opportunity to achieve their full potential and to develop knowledge, skills and attitudes so that they are able to contribute to the community and to enjoy a full and satisfying life. The mission of the Inspectorate is to promote quality and accountability within the education system of Timor Leste. The ten responsibilities of the Inspectorate given in Section 3 of the Organic Law are:

1. To evaluate and inspect the administrative, financial and asset management of Institutions and integrated offices of the educational system.
2. To evaluate and inspect the pedagogical methods of the institutions, offices and activities from the different levels of private and cooperative education, and vocational public training.
3. To recommend and to collaborate in preparing measures for the continuous improvement of the education system.
4. To undertake disciplinary processes of civil servants and agents of the educational system based on the applicable law.
5. To undertake inspections, inquiries, investigations and audits of a pedagogic, administrative and financial nature, in the schools, agencies and other services of the ME, without prejudice to the responsibilities of other inspection services.
6. To receive and follow-up and respond to claims and complaints of citizens.
7. To verify and ensure compliance with legal provisions and guidelines as defined.

8. To provide opinions on issues of a pedagogical and technical character as required by the Minister of Education.
9. To collaborate in the ongoing training of leaders, teachers and non-teachers from education and teaching institutions, and
10. To exercise other responsibilities necessary to give effect to the responsibilities as described above.

Other limits to the authority of the Inspectorate were determined by *The Base Law for Education* published 29 October 2008. It established the general policy context for the operations of the Inspectorate. Chapter 4 of the *Base Law* requires the evaluation and inspection of the education system with regard to its “efficiency, effectiveness and quality” (Article 42) using permanent, continuous and public assessment. Such assessment is to cover student learning, the performance of teachers, non-teaching staff, teaching establishments, and the system and its policies, and all forms of education. Indeed, the scope of ‘system evaluation’ to be provided by the Inspectorate is defined in the *Base Law* as an “instrument for defining the education policy, promoting the quality of education and training, and the responsible and transparent management of all education system levels.” Evaluation is also to “allow an integrated, contextualized and compared interpretation of all the benchmarks it is based on.” (Article 42, 3-4). These requirements oblige officials in the Inspectorate to use summative, formative and comparative evaluation to assist with policy making, improving quality and managing the system and its institutions. The fundamental justification for ‘education inspection’ in the *Basic Law* is to “safeguard the legitimate interests” of all those who comprise the system (Article 45,1).

There are other laws that the Inspectorate has to comply with. For example, Decree-Law No. 17/2003, *On Statistics*, published 1 October 2003, requires the Inspectorate to seek any official statistics it needs from the National Statistics Directorate of the Ministry of Planning and Finance, or to obtain formal authorisation from the same authority prior to collecting its own statistics. In the interests of obtaining reliable results that can be used effectively, this Decree-Law also requires that “the collection, dissemination, and coordination of official statistics must be a professional endeavour that conforms to international standards”. Article 4 determines that “individual data shall be strictly confidential and may not be divulged without the express, written authorization of the individual or entity to which they pertain.”

All members of the Inspectorate must also comply with the ‘Code of Ethics for the Civil Service,’ the annex to the *Statute of the Civil Service*, Law No. 8/2004, approved 16 June 2004. A civil servant or an agent of the public administration shall:

1. Attend to the highest interests of the country, defend its national independence proclaimed on 28 November 1975, and respect the moral and cultural values of the people of Timor-Leste;
2. Comply with general laws and specific laws on the civil service;
3. Implement and promote respect for human rights, the rule of law and democratic principles;
4. Be a role model of personal integrity, authenticity and honesty, always seeking to contribute towards the good reputation of the civil service through an exemplary daily behavior;

5. Serve the public with courtesy and dedication, placing public interest above any private interest;
6. Discharge his or her duties with commitment, intelligence and skill, seeking to improve his or her performance through training and other courses for an efficient execution of the tasks arising from his or her position;
7. Abide by directions and instruction lawfully established by superiors and reject any other instruction, either actual or attempted, from any entity or individual outside the public administration of Timor-Leste to influence his or her official actions;
8. Comply with the law and honor personal obligations, abiding by decisions from courts;
9. Serve the public without any form of discrimination or intimidation, including sexual discrimination, and without verbal or physical abuse in relations at the workplace;
10. Oppose any threat, intimidation or conduct intended to directly or indirectly interfere in the mission of the public administration of Timor-Leste.
11. Correctly explain his or her functions and level, as well as the nature of his or her position in the public administration of Timor-Leste to individuals outside the system;
12. Refuse any favor, offer, remuneration or any other gift being given in return for the execution or omission of an official act;
13. Use property of the public administration of Timor-Leste or information accessed to in his or her official capacity solely for activities related to his or her functions and official obligations;
14. Disclose to the public administration any direct or indirect benefit he or she may derive from any profitable activity, business or company under his or her responsibility or obligations;
15. Contribute to the consolidation or national unity as a *sine qua non* for the economic and social development of Timor-Leste.

Ministry and Inspectorate Operations

The Ministry of Education has two parallel structures; the (as yet unnamed) 'Schools Directorate' led by the Director General, and the Inspectorate, led by the Inspector General. At March 2008, the 'Schools Directorate' comprised eight National Directorates, each led by a National Director: Policy, Planning and Development; Administration and Finance; School Curriculum, Materials and Assessment; School Accreditation and Operations; Adult and Non-Formal Education; Professional Training; Technical and Higher Education; and Culture. There have been many minor structural changes since as well as role switches directed by the Minister consistent with the 'Golden Rule' of human resource management in Timor Leste; no one gets fired.

By January 2009, in each of the five regions, the 'Schools Directorate' comprised a Regional Director, and six Chefs (Heads) of Departments in the same functional areas as the central Directorates, less Adult and Non-Formal Education. Each Chef has a Head of Section, and between three and six staff to link with School Directors. These structures are generating confusion. The Chefs report to their Regional Director and to their National Director, creating ideal conditions for role conflict. Similarly, the School Directors report to all six Chefs through District Coordinators, and to their District Superintendent through their

School Inspector, confirming why role conflict and paralysis in policy implementation has become endemic.

The Office of the Inspector General comprises the Inspector General, the Adjunto Inspector General, two National Inspectors (one financial and one pedagogic), a Translator/ Investigator/ Joint Office Manager, and secretarial support staff. In each region the Inspectorate comprises a Regional Inspector, up to three District Superintendents and between 15 and 20 School Inspectors, depending on the size of the region. How regional personnel understand their roles was the focus of sustained ethnographic study, feedback discussions and professional development, now reported.

In each region studied closely, two parallel administrative structures were found that served different functions. Consistent with the Organic Law, the function of each Regional Inspectorate was to ensure the quality and accountability of educational and administrative services. The function of each Regional Directorate was to direct and support schooling operations. The comparative roles are contrasted in Table 3, as verified by incumbents:

Insert Table 3 about here

All senior posts have formal job descriptions that reflect these differences between the ‘Schools Directorate’ and the Inspectorate. There are many reasons, however, to doubt these distinctions in practice and their effectiveness.

Being an Educational Administrator in the Ministry or the Inspectorate

When asked about their major sources of dissatisfaction, the Regional Directors emphasised the time it takes to get accurate evidence from schools, especially remote schools, and to help them develop the quality of their classrooms without access to appropriate resources. They both called for laptops for all School Inspectors, standard establishment resources for schools irrespective of location (e.g. desks and chairs for students) on the grounds of equity, fuel for motorbikes and vehicles, and accommodation for Regional Office personnel moving to take up their posts. They were also concerned about the quality of some temporary teachers, the shortage of trained teachers and the limited number of weeks that teachers work in a year. More broadly there was concern over other inequities in resource distribution, the comparative level of national investment in education, and the extent to which District Coordinators were reliant on District Superintendents and School Inspectors to communicate with School Directors.

The evidence was also that Regional Directors were far happier in their work than Regional Inspectors. The Regional Inspectors’ major sources of dissatisfaction came from a range of areas. There were inconsistencies and gaps noted in the Organic Law. There were some serious management challenges in the Inspectorate. There was a felt need for the Inspector General, National Inspectors and the Regional Inspectors to meet to coordinate their strategic and action planning, brainstorm solutions and offer leadership. Above all, there was a strongly felt need for the Minister and his National Directors to stop bypassing Regional Inspectors and for all District Superintendents to work to their job descriptions derived from the Organic Law.

There were major anomalies noted in leadership incentive structures: the different levels of salaries paid to School Inspectors from primary or secondary origins that were now doing the same jobs; School Inspectors being paid the same salaries as School Directors and teachers; and, no compensation paid for job-related costs or for project management and inspection responsibilities. All interviewed stressed basic resource gaps; fuel for the School Inspectors' motorbikes, accommodation for regional personnel, materials for schools, and no access to further training for management and leadership. They were all concerned about having to implement political agendas, being pressed to share the findings of investigations early - when the need to collect evidence thoroughly and with confidentiality was paramount, and the absence of investigative protocols that protected all interests. Many of these concerns were addressed in the development of the *School Inspectors' Manual*, and high priority has been given since to system data collection using laptops, a new salary / incentive regime and methods of reimbursing job-related expenses.

Six (of 12) District Superintendents confirmed their generic role:

1. Implement Ministry policy and the Minister's priorities, reporting implementation to the Regional Director and Regional Inspector.
2. Coordinate and guide the development of School Inspectors' services
3. Assist with Inspectorate activities, including
4. Responding to complaints with investigations, reports and recommendations to the level requested
5. Conducting evaluations of teachers and school directors to anticipate problems and help them with their professional development
6. Offering conflict resolution through face-to-face and cell phone conferences
7. Responding to inquiries from the Ministry, parents, the Police and journalists with accurate information and other problem solving strategies.
8. Assist the Regional Directorate with the administration of the district's education services, by
 - a. Coordinating data collection from School Directors (about their students, teachers and schools)
 - b. Reporting as requested to Regional and National officials (about educational and administrative matters), copying the Regional Inspector
 - c. Advising Regional Chieftains on educational and administrative improvement projects
 - d. Copying information to Regional and National officials potentially affected by an issue.
9. Collaborating with NGOs and other Government Departments with support and improvement projects in the district (e.g.s Plan International, Friends of Ailin, Department of Health, Department of the Police).

Clearly evident in this list is a blend of operational management and evaluation duties, the province in law of both the 'Schools Directorate' and the Inspectorate. The main sources of dissatisfaction for District Superintendents were the unreasonable demands from multiple regional and national sources for priority attention to their requests; again, examples of unresolved role conflict. The demands considered most unreasonable were those that

assumed that (a) district offices had electricity, (b) School Directors would suspend teaching and learning to respond to administrative requests, (c) remote schools could be reached quickly and easily, and (d) School Inspectors can be quickly and easily redirected away from their scheduled tasks. Other sources of dissatisfaction included poor relationships between some school inspectors and teachers, no fuel budget for motorbikes, no maintenance budget for motorbikes or generators, no expenses budget to refund School Inspectors their service costs, no computers and electricity for report writing, personal laptops being used for work when electricity is only on from 6-12 pm (which means night work in addition to the day shift), and finally, the lack of transparency in the Ministry of Education over budget and resource allocations. There have been more recent and focussed efforts to rectify many of these deficiencies that are not uncharacteristic of organisational 'start ups'.

At the same time, the main sources of satisfaction for District Superintendents were (a) the time they spent in schools helping teachers plan and teach better and School Directors lead better, (b) helping School Inspectors evaluate and develop teachers and School Directors, (c) the provision of motorbikes that make day visits to more remote schools much easier, (d) being promoted to a position of administrative responsibility recognised as important by the Minister, (e) enjoying the challenges of educational leadership that require fast learning to solve problems, and (f) having the responsibility to develop education on behalf of the nation.

These District Superintendents shared the view that the service of the Inspectorate could be significantly improved by installing electricity generators in each district office, helping manage fuel and maintenance budgets to raise the effectiveness and extend the life of electrical and mechanical equipment, revising their Job Descriptions, adopting computer-aided administration, refurbishing and lighting their offices, and most urgently, rehabilitating schools in remote areas. Overall, the press on District Superintendents suggests that they may drift or be gradually encouraged into the operational management of schools and take up duties that are the responsibility of the Regional Directorate.

A similar blended profile is evident in the generic role of School Inspectors suggested and verified by 35 (out of a total of 65) practitioners:

1. To be responsible for the improvement of School Administration, including
 - a. The performance of School Directors (e.g.s through performance evaluation, guidance over procedures)
 - b. The quality of data about students, teachers and schools in the EMIS
 - c. The quarterly and annual action plans for the whole school, and
 - d. Gaining compliance with the Minister's priorities.
2. To monitor, supervise and help develop Teacher Performance, at basic to secondary/technical levels of education, including
 - a. Improving the discipline of teachers (e.g. punctuality, warnings and recommended transfer/ terminations for non-compliance with policy)
 - b. The quality of pedagogy (e.g. teaching plans, observations, demonstrations, coaching)
 - c. The implementation of the National Curriculum
 - d. The planning and provision of teacher in-service training.
3. To monitor and evaluate the use of School Resources, including

- a. The preparation of school budget proposals
 - b. The preparation of proposals for new schools
 - c. The use of the school grants allocated (e.g.s teaching resources, textbooks, library books, facilities, playgrounds, sports equipment)
 - d. The quality of the learning environment for students
 - e. The quality of the professional environment for teacher development.
4. To help maintain and improve Relationships between students, teachers, parents and School Directors, including
 - a. responding to complaints from parents about unacceptable behaviours of teachers
 - b. encouraging contributions from PTAs
 - c. investigating claims at the request of the Minister
 - d. referring allegedly criminal matters to the Police, and
 - e. reporting as requested to the Regional Inspector, the Inspector General and the Minister.
 5. To respond appropriately to Natural Disasters, and
 6. To monitor the quality of School Support Programmes, including
 - a. The School Feeding Programme
 - b. UNICEF and other aid programmes, and
 - c. Other Department programmes that affect schools (e.g. Infrastructure building and road programmes enabling student access, Health training for teachers, parents and students).

When asked about their sources of dissatisfaction, these School Inspectors stressed the great distances between schools, the rivers and hilltop locations; one third of schools take over two hours to visit, and the most remote schools take up to seven hours to reach. They also noted that many of their schools were in bad condition with poor facilities, such as few chairs and tables, and they did not have a digital camera to collect evidence. The greatest irritants in the role included the non reimbursement of job-related costs, having no laptops to write reports, having different pay rates in the team for the same work, not having raincoats for the rainy season, their ambiguous status compared to Chefes with no career structure or salary regime, and students and teachers having to walk large distances to get to school, up to four hours each way, with uneven punctuality and attendance during the rainy season.

The main sources of satisfaction for these School Inspectors included being recognised, trusted and respected by the Government and improving remote schools so that students there will have more equal opportunities. They enjoyed being promoted to extra responsibility, developing a career of professional educational leadership, and educational management, and leading the implementation of national policies and international ideas. Many referred to the spirit of independence in Timor Leste that takes pride in national achievements. Personally, they took huge pleasure from seeing teachers in school on time, teachers teaching, students learning, teachers responding to guidance over pedagogy and curriculum, and positive relationships between School Inspectors and teachers.

When asked to explain how their work could be made more effective, these School Inspectors emphasised the need for the training for secondary/ technical teachers to be

focussed more on pedagogy while providing them with a properly structured curriculum. Similarly, the teachers in basic education needed many more teaching aids to match their training in pedagogy and curriculum. They were very concerned about School Directors' authority; they needed to be formally confirmed in their current posts so they can actively manage their schools – they were appointed for a one-year term in 2004/5 and have been 'in limbo' since. Finally, they suggested that School Directors be provided with a *School Management Manual*, to confirm their responsibilities, powers and procedures, and training in educational leadership so that they lead the improvement of learning in their schools. Interestingly, there was strong demand for leadership within the Inspectorate; these School Inspectors wanted more regular meetings with their District Superintendents to handle the load of investigations, in addition to the scheduled visits to schools and occasional meetings with the Regional Inspector to develop precedents for deciding common types of cases. Apart from this, a list of basic resources was suggested; School Inspectors to be given waterproof panniers for the motorbikes to carry mail, documents and teaching resources to schools, and digital cameras to record (and cell phone cards to report) the reality in schools. The evident blend of directorate and inspectorate duties highlights a real danger; that School Inspectors may drift into the operational management of schools and take up duties that are the responsibility of the Regional Directorates' Chefes, District Coordinators and School Directors.

Persistent Challenges

While the law in Timor Leste determines that educational administration and management are to be structured and operated as two parallel systems, with complimentary purposes, they are actually managed by the Minister as one organization. The Minister acts as a Chief Executive Officer. Members of the 'Schools Directorate' and the Inspectorate are expected to 'cross over' and cooperate to implement the priorities the Minister articulates freshly every two weeks. This makes some sense, when, for example, a Directorate in the 'Schools Directorate' and the Inspectorate cooperate to run five-day workshops in different parts of the country to create multiple-choice test items for the National Examinations (written, incidentally, in Tetun and with reference to Indonesian textbooks).

On the other hand, whenever the Minister acts as a CEO, calling his senior staff together for consultations every two weeks, sometimes announcing decisions, sometimes later by formal written despatch, he blurs the functions of the 'Schools Directorate' and the Inspectorate. Since those invited include the Director General, the National Directors, the Regional Directors but not the Regional Chefes, there is rarely systematic follow up implementation planning, and indeed, no time to do so before the next meeting is called. This undermines the development of the strategic management capacity of the senior executive team in the 'Schools Directorate'. Since those invited to these meetings also include the Inspector General, the Ajunto Inspector General, the Regional Inspectors and the 13 District Superintendents, but not the National Inspectors, this effectively undermines the standing of the Regional and National Inspectors and the development of the strategic management capacity of the senior executive team in the Inspectorate.

One explanation is that this approach reflects past experience. In Indonesian times there were no regional officials, just all powerful District Superintendents. Another

explanation is that the Minister invited the District Superintendents to attend when he felt that his message was ‘not getting through’ the Regional Directors and Regional Inspectors. He reinforced this point by awarding the District Superintendents new cars. Another explanation is that the conflation of structures, Ministerial micromanagement, the exclusionary language policy, the absence of systematic implementation planning after Ministerial meetings, and the tight centralised control of operational funds are the primary causes of the communication gaps, confusion and patches of paralysis.

Other effects of blending the two structures were noted above in the over lapping roles of Regional Inspectors, District Superintendents and School Inspectors. The effects are also felt acutely at school level. Recall, School Directors and District Coordinators are expected to report to many Chefes, to a District Coordinator, and to a School Inspector. Conversely, School Inspectors are expected to monitor, evaluate and advise, as well as *direct* School Directors, without a formal line of authority and status. The results, as at other levels, are degrees of confusion and role conflict. It is interesting that when expert advisors from other countries raise these issues with senior officials they tend to be deemed initially as ‘culturally insensitive’ and then accepted as requiring strategic cultural leadership.

One feature of the appointees in both the ‘Schools Directorate’ and in the Inspectorate at the time of the fieldwork is that they were all men, except for one National Director, a District Superintendent and three School Inspectors. Many of these men were educational leaders in the previous Indonesian political era and most will retire in the next decade. The outcomes of the selection criteria and processes in use are self evidently sexist and ageist. They may also have prevented talented educational leaders who are women or from younger generations being appointed. Such outcomes may not be in the best interests of students. Both issues may need to be addressed by a national human resource management policy review.

The national salary rates are another major source of concern. Table 4 is a summary of the current compensation structures in education.

Insert Table 4 about here

Four problems are evident in Table 4. The base salaries of teachers are low, although they have served well enough to attract 1800 untrained ‘volunteer’ teachers in 2008, who were often paid by the community until they were able to acquire basic skills, pass the Ministry’s test for teachers and then successfully apply for teaching contracts. There is, however, no monetary incentive for people to accept leadership responsibility in either of the Pre-Primary/ Primary or in the Pre-Secondary/ Secondary service. The authority of School Inspectors and School Directors is regarded as ambiguous because they are paid the same as experienced teachers in schools. School Inspectors doing the same job in primary and secondary sectors are paid differently, which generates resentment. It appears that a national human resource management policy review was needed to relate the degree of responsibility in jobs to salaries

in order to help reinforce authority systems and to provide career incentives to encourage leadership service, retention, and professional development.

The remote inland mountain ridge schools of Timor Leste pose unique challenges. For example, over 50% of the 94 schools administered from the Manufahi District Office at Same take between 2-4 hours to reach, some on foot for the last few kilometres. Many of these schools are cut off during the rainy season. Another problem closely associated with remote schools is high rates of repetition in the first two grades, as evident in Table 5:

Insert Table 5 about here

While the Minister announced that repetition was to stop in Grades 1 and 2 from 2010, it remains to be seen if and how this will be implemented. More broadly, these children attending remote hilltop schools face an array of unique disadvantages, and a Remote Schools Policy and Programme is urgently needed to provide a comprehensive response. A great deal about effective delivery systems in these challenging circumstances may well be learned from a review of the successful School Feeding Programme which has reputedly improved the basic nutrition, attendance and alertness levels of students across the country.

Another niggling concern is corruption. Most attention to date has focussed on the alleged misuse of school grants. To illustrate the scale of the problem, six (5%) of Vequeque's 116 schools were investigated in depth for the alleged misuse of school grants. The Regional Inspector, the District Superintendent and four School Inspectors collaborated to conduct the investigation in a rigorous manner. Two (2%) School Directors were found to be at fault, one case involving \$1,500 and the other \$600. Both School Directors admitted culpability, and agreed to repay the monies, to be demoted and to be transferred to other schools as teachers. The outcomes were reported to the Minister.

Similarly rigorous processes were used in Lautem to investigate 96 schools between October 2008 and January 2009. Allegations of misuse were investigated in nine (10%) schools. The allegations were found to be warranted in five schools (5%) and similar solutions were negotiated to those used in Vequeque. Again, the outcomes were reported to the Minister.

This suggests that the scale of corruption in the misuse of school grants is probably quite limited, compared to exaggerated press comment and resultant political saliency, and may well be contained by School Inspectors policing transparency in the collection and disbursement of school grants, while not engaging in the processes themselves. And when these small scale misdemeanours are encountered, it is not clear if hidden 'plea bargaining' within the Ministry will provide an adequate deterrent to further occurrences or comply with the law – it requires cases apparently involving criminal behaviour to be referred automatically to a department of state responsible for investigating corruption in government. To illustrate, a case was thoroughly investigated in a highland region where the triangulating evidence indicated that a School Inspector had skimmed about \$1,400 from school grants allocations. This finding posed three serious problems for the Minister: will this apparent criminal behaviour be referred by the appropriate authority as required under law or 'plea bargained' within the Ministry of Education; will the consequences of not sustaining the separation of powers between operational management and evaluation

agencies be acted on; and, will the consequences of not sustaining the separation of policy making and policy implementation in portfolio management lead to improved strategic leadership. These are not inconsequential issues since the scale of corruption around school grants is likely to be quite minimal compared to the scale of corruption in employment practices, where many teachers apparently continue to be paid when not at work. Having clarity in principle and in process concerning corruption could be enormously helpful to Timor Leste in the longer term.

It is also important that this critical identification of systemic challenges be balanced by a fulsome recognition of the extraordinary achievements of the Minister, the previous Ministers, and their officials in the 'Schools Directorate' and the Inspectorate. In a short period of time they have reconstructed an operational education system out of the ashes of the prior education system. This is a major national and international achievement. Educational administrators and managers in Timor Leste may be desperately short of resources and beset by serious organisational and leadership challenges, but not of a fierce determination to raise the quality of education for all. Any follow up research in Timor Leste will confirm that education is regarded, in the Ministry, in the regions and in most remote villages, as the most important expression of national independence.

Table 1: Household Heads' Fluency in Tetun and Portuguese in Timor Leste

| H'hold head | Fluency in Tetun (%) | | | | Fluency in Portuguese (%) | | | |
|-------------|----------------------|---------|---------------------|----------------|---------------------------|---------|---------------------|----------------|
| | Fluent | Average | Barely intelligible | Unintelligible | Fluent | Average | Barely intelligible | Unintelligible |
| Females | 81.9 | 12.5 | 4.2 | 1.4 | 0.0 | 6.0 | 3.0 | 91.0 |
| Males | 91.9 | 5.4 | 2.2 | 0.5 | 6.3 | 12.9 | 8.9 | 71.9 |
| Total | 90.4 | 6.5 | 2.5 | 0.6 | 5.4 | 11.8 | 8.0 | 74.8 |

Table 2: Household Heads' Fluency in Bahasa Indonesian and English in Timor Leste

| H'hold head | Fluency in Bahasa | | | | Fluency in English | | | |
|-------------|-------------------|---------|---------------------|----------------|--------------------|---------|---------------------|----------------|
| | Fluent | Average | Barely intelligible | Unintelligible | Fluent | Average | Barely intelligible | Unintelligible |
| Females | 14.3 | 11.4 | 5.7 | 68.6 | 1.5 | 1.5 | 0.0 | 97.0 |
| Males | 28.0 | 18.8 | 11.3 | 41.9 | 2.2 | 2.2 | 4.3 | 91.4 |
| Total | 25.9 | 17.6 | 10.5 | 46.0 | 2.1 | 2.1 | 3.6 | 92.3 |

Table 3: The Comparative Roles of the Regional Director and Regional Inspector in Timor Leste

| Dimension | Regional Director | Regional Inspector |
|--|--|---|
| Purpose | To administer schooling operations | To ensure quality and accountability |
| Structures | Six sections each led by a Chefe and Section Head to support schooling operations, with their District Coordinators linking with School Directors | Three District Superintendents, each with five School Inspectors |
| Duties | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Administer schooling • Implement Ministry policies and Minister's priorities • Report quarterly to the Director General • Provide special reports to the Minister and Director General • Develop Region's Annual Action Plans • Contribute to the National Education Strategic Plan and Budget Proposals • Control National Examinations • Sign schooling certificates • Comply with other requests from Minister and Director General | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain quality by coordinating the three Superintendents, and through them, the School Inspectors • Evaluate all Regional activities • Investigate complaints and report to the Minister and Inspector General as requested |
| Budgeting | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Constructs the Draft Regional Annual Plan and Budget Proposal in consultation with the Regional Inspector, other Regional Directors, National Directorates, and Director General. • Manages the Budget allocated to the Region through a Chefe. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advises the Regional Director regarding the Draft Regional Annual Plan and Budget Proposal in consultation with the Inspector General, Regional Director, Superintendents and School Inspectors. • Makes submissions to the Regional Director regarding expenditure in the Region. |
| Evaluation of Schooling and Administration | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Responds to evaluations provided by the Inspectorate. • Reports to the Director General and Minister, copying the Regional Inspector. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coordinates evaluations of the quality of schooling and administration to the Inspector General and Minister, copying the Regional Director. |
| Reports to | Director General | Inspector General |
| Access to Policy Making | Attends the Minister's Executive Meeting every second week, with Director General | Attends the Minister's Executive Meeting every second week, with Inspector General |

Table 4: Current Compensation in Timor Leste Education (Source: Ministry of Education)

| Level | Appointments Included | US\$/month |
|-------|--|------------|
| - | School Cook | \$50 |
| 1 | Temporary teacher in Pre-Primary and Primary Schools, inexperienced | \$153 |
| 2 | Pre-Prim / Primary Teacher with more than 6 years experience, Pre-Prim / Primary School Director, Pre-Prim / Primary School Inspector | \$183 |
| 4 | Pre-Sec / Secondary/ Technical teacher, inexperienced | \$221 |
| 4 | Pre-Sec / Secondary/ Technical teacher with more than 6 years experience, Pre-Sec/ Sec/ Tech School Director, Pre-Sec/Sec/ Tech School Inspector | \$238 |
| 5 | Chefes of Departments, District Superintendents | \$442 |
| 6 | Regional Directors, Regional Inspectors, National Directors, National Inspectors | \$640 |
| 7 | Director General, Inspector General | \$850 |

Table 5: Repetition Rates in Urban (Dili and Bacau) and three Rural Settings (Lautem, Manutoto, Viqueque) (Source: Ministry of Education)

| District | Grade 1 | Grade 2 |
|----------|----------------|----------------|
| Dili | females 6.87% | females 6.73% |
| | males 7.62% | males 8.59% |
| Bacau | females 14.39% | females 10.74% |
| | males 16.72% | males 14.24% |
| Lautem | females 31.72% | females 18.04% |
| | males 30.77% | males 23.82% |
| Manutoto | females 26.30% | females 17.44% |
| | males 27.18% | males 18.81% |
| Viqueque | females 28.35% | females 16.12% |
| | males 31.07% | males 18.82% |

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