



DATA MUST SPEAK

## Investing in the teaching profession

Research on positive deviant schools to improve learning in Togo

### Key findings



**Large class sizes in Togo are negatively associated with student learning outcomes and promotion rates.**



**The student-teacher ratio varies considerably from school to school.** Reassigning teachers to other schools to reduce these disparities could improve promotion rates.



**Female teachers close the gender gap** in promotion, dropout and graduation rates in primary and secondary school.



**Teachers' academic level and initial professional training are not correlated** with student performance.



**At an equivalent level of qualification, volunteer teachers are less successful** than officially accredited ones, but they help to reduce class sizes.



**Students whose teacher is also a head teacher** perform less well academically.

## Context

Despite government efforts and several recent educational reforms (including curriculum reforms and policies on secondary-school teaching, school meals and teachers), there are still **challenges in access, equity, quality and management in the Togolese education system**. Despite these challenges, some schools perform better than others, even in disadvantaged areas. By identifying these positive deviant schools and the good practices that make them successful, important lessons can be learned to improve learning in Togo and contribute to the efficient implementation of the Education Sector Plan 2020–2030.



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## Research on positive deviant schools

Against this background, the **Data Must Speak (DMS)** research on **positive deviant schools** explores local solutions for improving the quality of education in Togo. The first stage of the research was to conduct **a statistical analysis using the Education Management Information System (EMIS) and national examination scores** to identify factors associated with school performance and quantify their effects. The analysis presented in this brief focuses on the main findings of this stage.<sup>1</sup>

## Research results

**Large class sizes in Togo are negatively associated with student learning outcomes and promotion rates** (see Figures 1 and 2). At the primary level, the lack of teachers and the resulting large class sizes strongly influence the likelihood of promotion. As a result, reducing class size from 44 to 34 students could increase the promotion rate by 6.4 percentage points and the pass rate for the Primary School Completion Certificate (CEPD) by 1.4 points. The impact of class size tends to be stronger when classes are smaller. For example, moving from 30 to 20 students per class in primary school would increase the promotion rate by 7.7 percentage points, while moving from 60 to 50 students is associated with a smaller increase (5.1 points).

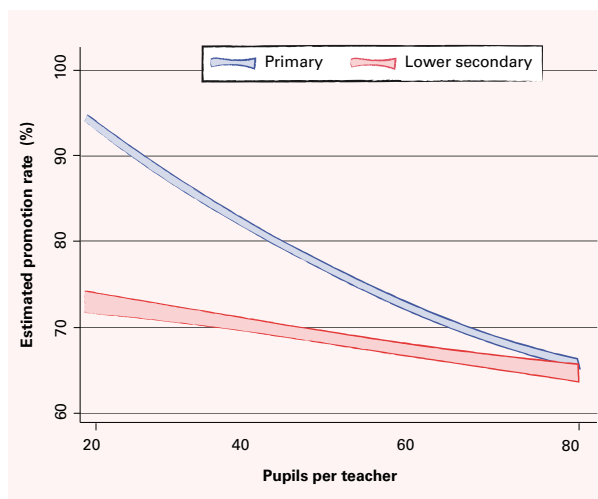
In addition, the shortage of primary school teachers is contributing to a significant use of mixed-age classes (affecting 20.2 per cent of students in 2020/21), which is associated with a 1.6 percentage point decrease in the promotion rate.

**The negative impact of teacher shortages is also felt in lower secondary schools**, where a higher student-teacher ratio results in lower promotion rates and lower scores on the Lower Secondary Completion Certificate (BEPC) examinations, along with higher dropout rates. If the student-teacher ratio were reduced from 50 to 40, the promotion rate could increase by 1.8 percentage points.

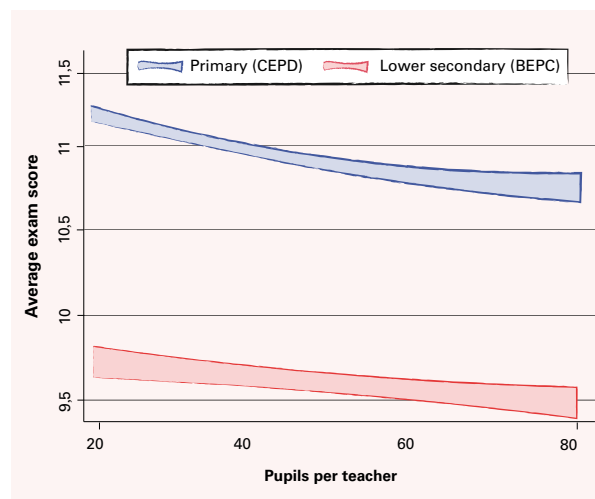
**In addition to the lack of teachers in the system, there is an inequitable distribution of teachers among schools.** The student-teacher ratio varies considerably between schools.

<sup>1</sup> Although rigorous, this analysis has its limitations, since it is based on observational data. The statistical models account for school fixed effects and involve numerous controls to reduce the likelihood that the estimated relationships are based on systematic differences between schools. However, additional studies will be required to verify that the observed effects are causal and not simply correlations.

**Figure 1: Modelling the impact of class size on promotion rates in primary and lower secondary**



**Figure 2: Modelling the impact of class size on Primary School Completion Certificate and Lower Secondary Completion Certificate examination results**



Source: EMIS data for 2020–2021.

At the primary level, for example, 25 per cent of students are in a class with 30 or fewer students, while 25 per cent are in a class with 57 or more students. The gap in teacher distribution is therefore high in Togo compared with other African countries ([International Institute for Educational Planning, Dakar, 2016](#)) and has tended to widen in recent years. Closing the teacher deployment gap in countries such as Lesotho or the Comoros, which are performing relatively well, could increase the primary school promotion rate by 0.7 percentage points.

**Teachers' academic level and initial professional training are not correlated with student outcomes, with little difference in the level of teacher qualification.** Pupils in the final year of primary school perform better on the Primary School Completion Certificate (CEPD) examinations when teachers were trained at a teacher training colleges, but the relationship with average performance on the CEPD is weak (a 0.14 percentage point increase). There is no relationship between teacher education and promotion rates in primary and lower secondary school. Given the lack of correlation between initial teacher training and student performance, there is a case for further examination of the relevance and effectiveness of the various training programmes.

**At an equivalent level of qualification, having a volunteer teacher, i.e. one who is recruited and paid by the community, is associated with a lower promotion rate.** For example, the promotion rate drops by 0.5 percentage points in primary school when children are taught by a volunteer rather than an appointed teacher. The difference is not significant at the secondary level.

**Teacher performance appears to suffer when the teacher also serves as head teacher** (with a 0.5 percentage point drop in the promotion rate at the primary level). This may be due to an excessive administrative workload that impacts on children's learning time.

## Education policy areas for further exploration



Once the new teacher training reform is implemented, its impact on student learning should be assessed.



Examine the various options for reducing class sizes and the sustainable use of mixed-aged classes.



Consider strategies for reducing the administrative workload of head teachers.



Review policy options for closing the gap in teacher allocation between different schools.

## About the Data Must Speak research on positive deviant schools

The DMS research on positive deviant schools in Togo was developed jointly by the Ministry of Primary, Secondary, Technical and Artisanal Education of Togo (MEPSTA), local project partners, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) Togo country office, and the UNICEF Innocenti – Global Office of Research and Foresight. This global research project is being implemented in 14 countries in Africa, Asia and Latin America. It is co-funded by the *Knowledge and Innovation Exchange* (KIX) programme of the Global Partnership for Education/International Development Research Centre, the Hewlett Foundation, the Jacobs Foundation, the Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation, the Schools2030 programme (led by the Aga Khan Foundation), and UNICEF's Thematic Fund for Education.

## Series of thematic briefs

This brief is the second in a series of documents produced as part of the DMS research in Togo. It focuses primarily on the issue of teaching staff. The other briefs focus on gender issues and the resources allocated to schools. It aims to inform the dialogue on educational policies in Togo and other countries.

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