

Teaching policies and learning outcomes in Sub-Saharan Africa

Issues and Options



Policy Brief

October 2016

Introduction

Content and Aims

The purpose of this publication is to expand on the 2015 Teacher Policy Development Guidelines established by the UNESCO Teachers Task Force (TTF). The document draws on research previously done by UNESCO Headquarters, the World Bank, and the African research community about the relationships between the teaching profession and the achievement of education quality and equity targets, education improvement and efficiency, and national assessment policies and the monitoring of SDG 4.

The main aim is to better connect teacher policy with the broader education improvement agenda in Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) with the hope of providing inspiration for more responsive, demand-led teacher policies specific to the African context.

Expanding Access

Countries in SSA have seen a massive expansion in their education systems over the past two decades as a result of the global drive to meet the goals of Education for All (EFA) and the education-related Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

Since the resolutions of the World Forum on EFA in Dakar in 2000, governments have been calling for

education to become a national priority, with Ministries of Education initiating national education action plans and strengthening public sector investments, as well as mobilizing various stakeholders across sectors. Attempts to expand access have included creating pro-poor expenditure policies, building new schools and rehabilitating existing schools and classrooms, as well as abolishing schools fees and providing educational materials to students.

As the demand for primary education increases, there has been a concerted effort to increase the supply of teachers. Many African countries invested in teacher recruitment drives, along with reviews of teacher pay structures and incentive packages.

In hopes of more responsive policy making, education functions and powers have been devolved to regional and provincial education departments, including the revision of school governance systems to include contextually relevant forms of school-based and community management.

As a result, access to primary and secondary education across SSA has reached unprecedented levels, with near universal primary enrolment in certain countries and increasing enrolment in almost all countries each year.

Learning outcomes

In the last five years, a number of sub-regional learning assessments, such as UWEZO in Tanzania, Uganda, and Kenya, have suggested that educational progress has not been met with meaningful improvements in the quality of schooling and learning and problematic gaps remain in learning achievements. Many primary and secondary school students are failing to acquire the most basic levels of literacy in reading and mathematics.

Lack of access to quality schooling deepens the marginalization of Africa's young people, as they leave school at an early age to look for work, without proper opportunities for upward social mobility. Education strategies, as well as support and monitoring mechanisms, are needed to improve the quality of education for millions of children who are already enrolled in school but not receiving a good quality education.

Contextualizing for Africa:

*Applying the Continental Education Strategy for Africa (CESA)
and Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG4)*

The global education agenda has re-focused international attention on the quality of education and learning and the necessity to ensure equitable learning outcomes for all students.

Building on the commitments of these global education agendas, such as the Incheon Declaration, Education 2030 Framework for Action, and SDG 4, and in a bid to “create” a new African citizen who will be an effective change agent for the sustainable development of the continent, the Africa Union Commission recently launched the CESA as a framework to transform education and training systems in Africa.

Teachers are recognized as the key providers of schooling at its point of delivery. This is aligned with both the SDG and CESA frameworks, which underscore the importance of having highly-qualified, well-educated and motivated teachers to meet Africa's growing demand for education and shifting skill requirements.

Among UNESCO's top priorities are the training, recruitment, retention, status and working conditions of teachers. UNESCO-IICBA, UNESCO's International Task Force on Teachers, and Education International have championed the importance of competent, motivated teachers for the achievement of SDG 4 and CESA education targets.

Issues and Options for Strengthening Teacher Policy

Below are the nine dimensions of the UNESCO 2015 Teacher Policy Guidelines, drawing on insights, examples and findings from a 2010 World Bank study that looked at a broad spectrum of teacher issues in eight Anglophone countries in relation to teacher recruitment and retention, teacher training, deployment, governance and finance issues. Insights from UNESCO's own research programs and projects in support of teacher policy in SSA have also been included.

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Issues and Options for Strengthening Teacher Policy (*cont.*)

1. TEACHER RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION	
Challenges/Issues	Policy Options
Effective planning requires the constant collection and monitoring of data from a variety of sources. Teacher attrition and wastage rates require annual monitoring	Better planning of teacher supply and identifying immediate and longer-term priority areas for intervention
Expansion of capacity of higher education systems exacerbates the problem of attracting suitably qualified candidates. Selection based on lower academic qualifications exacerbates the deployment problem	Broaden criteria for selection beyond academic performance.
Making the teaching profession more attractive increases the cost per teacher	Upgrade primary teachers qualifications and increase the teacher remuneration
Teacher training colleges not reaching their targets for female recruitment	Systems of affirmative action can help increase equity of access
Primary level teachers generally have poor mathematical skills	Offer additional incentive payments to teachers of these subject areas. Lower the entry-level requirements and offer booster courses
Planning departments do not systemically or accurately project attrition of existing teachers	Adequate planning for teacher supply requires monitoring of teacher attrition.
2. TEACHER EDUCATION: INITIAL AND CONTINUING	
Challenges/Issues	Policy Options
The teaching of the content knowledge in initial training is not generally aligned to the contents of the school curriculum. The realities of teaching practice are not well connected.	Review instructional approaches to align them more closely with national learning goals. A stronger focus is needed on practical, rights-based and context-relevant classroom skills in poverty contexts
Teacher receive little to no training in the use of ICT as a pedagogic support	Teachers need pre-service training in the effective use of ICTs
Selection of teacher educators on the basis of purely academic criteria does not always guarantee the most appropriate selection	ICTs can be used to improve the training of teacher educators.
Most teachers, once qualified, have little access to CPD. Not enough instruction in leadership skills given in CPD	One promising model for CPD is Lesotho's District Resource Teachers (DRTs) Consider the role of Teachers' Unions in CPD
3. DEPLOYMENT	
Challenges/Issues	Policy Options
The distribution of better-qualified teachers, of female teachers and of teachers of maths and sciences, is highly inequitable	Financial incentives are widely used to attract and retain teachers in rural and remote schools, to increase willingness to work in difficult areas
Extra contributions from communities can potentially result in distortions of the teacher labor market	Some communities contribute to incentives for teachers within districts
Offering incentives at district level is likely to weaken the impact of incentives is not well-targeted	Some countries offer incentives at district levels

Absence of suitable housing	Support housing costs or provision of accommodation. Communities can access funds to provide teacher housing
Central deployment or forced distribution of teachers is likely to result in a great deal of loss of talents	Give teachers some influence over the locations of the posting appears to improve the equity of teacher deployment.
Shortage of primary and secondary school teachers results in the recruitment of unqualified teachers	Recruit unqualified teachers locally and then provide opportunities for them to upgrade to qualified status through in-service training
The situation of women teachers puts them at a disadvantage in relations to deployment	National education authorities can seek help in the planning elements through UNESCO-IICBA's Module for Gender Mainstreaming in Teacher Policies
Recruitment policies to address the deployment problem in rural areas have financial and practical implications	The availability of people willing to enter a teacher college specifically oriented to work in a rural areas demonstrates that it can be an attractive career
4. CAREER STRUCTURES/PATHS	
Education systems lack a clear career development paths and remuneration scheme . Must provide promotion and advancement opportunities with appropriate financial incentives	
5. TEACHER EMPLOYMENT AND WORKING CONDITIONS	
Teacher employment and working conditions should take the following into consideration: hours of work and work-life balance, classes sizes and PTRs, school infrastructure, availability and quality of learning materials, student behavior, school violence, and autonomy/control . Teacher employment conditions must be decided upon in consultation with teacher unions	
6. REWARD AND REMUNERATION	
Many countries have single salary scale and some schools may include retirement pension and social security provisions , along with other incentives like housing, family benefits, etc. Where government revenues are limited, higher salary levels may require a trade-off with other policy objectives . Some education systems provide teacher rewards, linking them with performance or with the aim of attracting, motivating, and retaining high-qualified teachers.	
7. TEACHING STANDARDS	
Clear and concise standards to understand and define what makes a good teacher and promote professionalism . School systems must develop contextually relevant expectations about teachers' knowledge, competences and attributes, and desirable levels of performance.	
8. TEACHER ACCOUNTABILITY	
Teachers are accountable for their performance and the quality of their teaching is key to a high-status teaching profession and enhancing learning. Reciprocally, education systems should be accountable to teachers , providing effective support and acceptable working conditions.	
Challenges/Issues	Policy Options
Head teachers are absent from the school even more than teachers	Clear guidelines on absence, cluster monitoring, school-based monitoring of teacher attendance; monitoring by PTs, SMCs, & parents
Late or inconsistency pay continues to be a major cause of absenteeism . Teachers' required to travel to collect payment	Improved responsiveness of the pay system . Absences can be reduced by creating a schedule for teachers' travel

External monitoring and inspection of schools are not generally enforced	Need decentralized inspectors serving small clusters of schools, living in their cluster, and using low-cost transportation
Community bodies have an important role to play in the quality, governance, and accountability of school	Parents can be involved in school activities through PTAs and SMCs
9. SCHOOL GOVERNANCE	
Challenges/Issues	Policy Options
Most head teachers are ill-prepared for school leadership role	Targeting principals as a route to educational improvements is substantially less costly than targeting teacher in the system. Quality of school leadership and management can be enhanced.

Policy Approach

1. Revisiting the policy cycle approach

The policy cycle approach, which presents the policy formulation process as a logical flow between discrete phases, has lost much of its realism in the case of teaching policy. Teachers' issues are complex and interconnected.

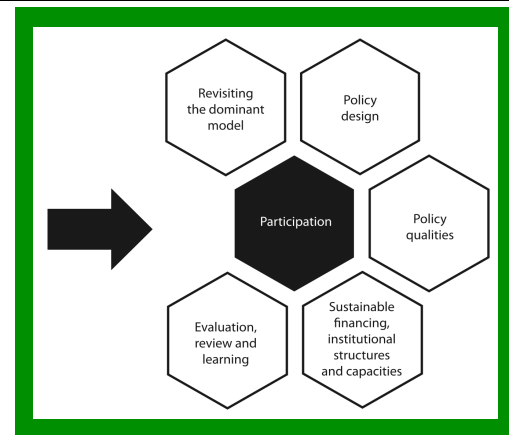
In Africa, teacher policy challenges and solutions have often merged together, rather than following one after another. Strategies have been formulated in the different dimensions of teacher policy at the same time, often leading to poorly conceived policies.

2. Renewing policy design principles

Teacher policies need to be designed, not just conceived. Teacher policies should be preceded by information gathering, research and quality control phases, before being trailed and implemented.

3. Enhancing the qualities of policy making

In contexts where significant reforms are very difficult to implement, aspects of innovation such as prototyping and experimentation should be encouraged. At the same time, gaps in education provision and teacher development, and growing public concern around education should be reflected through direct or indirect involvement of organized segments of civil society, NGOs, and Community Based Organizations (CBOs) willing to make a difference. Partnerships and focused, non-bureaucratic responses to teacher support will require new types of management skills and



training, social mobilization, and effective political leadership.

Key Phases

This guide envisages a systematic process for arriving at a holistic and coherent national policy framework for the teaching profession. After achieving a sound policy framework, the following steps should be followed, including adoption, implementation, dissemination, monitoring and evaluation.

The key phases are:

1. Building political will
2. Drafting technical support materials for discussion
3. Discussing policy aspects with the input of relevant stakeholders
4. Consolidating and balancing the contributions from stakeholders
5. Establishing the financial and political consequences of policy components
6. Preparing a framework for implementing and monitoring the policy
7. Enacting the policy

Conclusion

This publication presents options for addressing various teachers' issues in SSA and provides tools for the policymaking process in hopes of improving teachers' conditions and, therefore, students' learning outcomes. It is meant to serve as a toolkit for practitioners and policymakers, with the hope that they will benefit from the research and suggestions provided by IICBA and its partners.



To learn more, download and read the full document on [UNESCO-IICBA's website](#).