

## **Concept Note: Seminar Series on The Future of the Teaching Profession in Africa 2020 Teacher Professionalism & Curriculum in an Age of Disruption: The Impact of Pandemics and Other Crises on Education Systems**

Education International (EI), International Task Force on Teachers for Education 2030 (TTF), Open Society Foundations (OSF), and UNESCO International Institute for Capacity Building in Africa (IICBA) are organising the third in a three-part seminar series on *The Future of the Teaching Profession in Africa*. Building on the learning and outcomes of the two previous seminars and in light of the current disruption in teaching and learning worldwide, the theme for the 2020 seminar is *Teacher Professionalism & Curriculum in an Age of Disruption: The Impact of Pandemics and Other Crises on Education Systems*. This seminar contributes to the realisation of the objectives of the Continental Education Strategy for Africa (CESA), specifically in the area of Teacher Development, and supports the work of the CESA Teacher Development Cluster. This seminar also supports the work of the International Task Force on Teachers for Education 2030.

Due to the disruptions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, this year's seminar has been re-organised into a series of shorter online discussions of approximately 90-minutes each during the months of September and October 2020. The online discussions will take place on September 15, 22, 29 and October 6. The final culminating discussion, on October 6, will occur during the week of World Teachers' Day 2020. This series of online discussions will focus on curriculum, assessment, blended learning and teachers' professional autonomy and psychosocial support – all in the context of shocks and disruptions to education systems across Africa.

The proposed outcomes of the seminar are:

1. Sharing and exchange of collaborative approaches by governments and teacher unions to strengthen professional autonomy and responsiveness in times of disruption and uncertainty
2. Sharing examples of, responses to, or adaptation in moments of disruption of: curriculum; assessment; teacher professional development; modes of delivery; or psychosocial support for teachers, learners, school leaders, and education officials in order to ensure equitable and quality education.
3. An evidence-informed 5 to 10-point manifesto endorsed by Ministers of Education of participating countries on prioritising what really matters in education in Africa during times of disruption, and uncertainty.

### **Background:**

The COVID-19 pandemic has caused significant disruption of education globally including across Africa, with most countries closing schools and instituting other education changes. The pandemic has impacted all, it has thrown into sharp relief the fault lines of the world's inequalities amplifying inequalities of race, gender, class, disability, geography to name but a few. It adds to the existing struggle and suffering of the poor by shocking their fragile ecosystem into meltdown. It is a pandemic that adds to existing crises and fragility including that of conflict, environmental degradation, water scarcity and water wars, poor and unequal health systems, and food insecurity, all of which contribute to migration, the growth of refugees. All of this impacts adversely on equitable and quality learning

and hinders learning across the countries in Sub Saharan Africa. Further, the pandemic is likely to hinder the attainment of the global education SDG and the realisation of the Continental Education Strategy for Africa.

This moment of crisis caused by the COVID-19 pandemic provides an opportunity to examine how education systems can more thoughtfully and deliberately respond to these types of systemic disruptions by asking searching questions about the purpose and values of education so that all learners, particularly the poor, have access to quality and equitable education in contexts of uncertainty and disruption. How do countries respond when education is disrupted and face-to-face learning is not possible? Given the difficulties with technological infra-structure and problems with broadband connectivity how can equitable and quality learning continue effectively? What are the implications for teacher professionalism and decision-making? How might government and teacher unions work together to ensure students are learning in times of disruption? And how might we use these moments of disruption to more closely align education offerings to support the full development of the human personality as anticipated by Article 26 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights?

Professional autonomy has been one of the central concerns of this series of seminars from our work on professional standards at the 2018 seminar in Soweto through our focus on curriculum at the 2019 seminar in Cape Coast. How are teachers empowered to take decisions in the current situation and connect with their peers, their school leaders and their learners? In systems with adequate technological infrastructure and integrated blended learning approaches in operation, the shift in and out of online learning has been relatively smooth. What happens when the disruption is more sudden, acute, and sustained and how are educational relationships maintained and managed during these periods?

During the online discussion series, we will aim to engage senior Ministry of Education officials who are keen to enact a progressive education agenda in their countries. Ministers of Education will be invited to join the final online discussion and to adopt a manifesto developed over the course of the previous online discussions. In order to prepare for the outcomes listed above, we will carry out research to underpin the change agenda with robust evidence which reflects the challenges faced by countries in SSA and their innovative responses to the pandemic. This will include interviews with members of government and union leadership from participating countries. These interviews will inform the development of the inputs for the online discussions.

### **Participants:**

We expect a total of approximately 40 participants from 8 countries, including Burkina Faso, Cape Verde, Cote d'Ivoire, Ethiopia, Mali, Mozambique, South Africa, and Uganda. Country teams will comprise senior teacher union representatives (General Secretaries/Presidents) and representatives of government working with Ministries of Education. These government representatives may include Permanent Secretaries or Directors in the Ministry of Education particularly those with responsibility for curriculum and teacher professionalism and their Ministers of Education will be invited to join the final discussion. We will prioritise countries where these officials are seeking to enact a progressive education agenda and are in search of approaches that can help them advance these agendas. In order to focus our efforts, we will narrow the list of countries that participated in the previous seminars. The African Union and UNESCO will also participate to ensure better coherence with the Continental Education Strategy for Africa (CESA) and other regional education and teacher initiatives.

### **Approach:**

This series of online discussions, like the last seminar, will use an inclusive pedagogical and dialogic approach designed to draw and build on participants' existing knowledge as well as investigating evidence-based exemplars of good practice. The inclusive approach will encompass as support,

through interpretation, the participation of Francophone, Lusophone and Anglophone participants. This will provide a platform for progressing individual and collective solutions to the problems encountered.

Time will be allocated to discussions in country groups and language groups. We will build the seminar on the realities of participants' countries and will select participants to present based on interviews in the lead up to the online discussions.