



Virtual Workshop: Benchmarking on the Establishment and Functionality of a National Teacher Council for Uganda

Meeting Report

UNESCO International Institute for Capacity Building in Africa (IICBA), UNESCO Regional Office in Nairobi, and the Norwegian Teacher Initiative (NTI) in UNESCO Uganda

December 17, 2020, 14:00 – 15:30 East Africa Time

Venue: Zoom

Recording of the Webinar:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zUIpIbO9uY>

Summary of the Workshop

On December 17, 2020, the UNESCO antenna office in Kampala, Uganda, in collaboration with UNESCO IICBA and under the auspices of the Norwegian Teacher Initiative, facilitated an interactive virtual workshop for Ugandan officials to study the process of establishing a National Teacher Council in their country. In attendance were officials from the Ministry of Education and Sports (MoES), members of the task force on the establishment of the Uganda National Institute of Teacher Education and the task force mandated to establish the Uganda National Teacher Council, members of the Uganda National Teachers' Union, UNATU, principals of teacher training institutes and other stakeholders from the teacher education sector, as well as members of the private education sector and academia.

The workshop featured the experiences of Ghana and Kenya in establishing and operating teacher councils and opened a dialogue between these countries and Uganda. The purpose of this benchmarking exercise was to facilitate consultation with countries with prior experience in national teacher councils and to guide the Ugandan task force mandated to establish the National Teacher Council. This virtual consultation replaced the planned in-person visit by Ugandan officials to Ghana and Kenya, which was cancelled due to COVID-19, and it opened a working relationship between the three countries in the development of Uganda's National Teacher Council.

The specific objectives of the workshop were to provide Ugandan officials an opportunity to:

- Understand the process of establishing a national teacher council;
- Understand the mandate, composition, and functions of a national teacher council;
- Understand the successes and challenges in the functionality of national teacher councils established in other countries; and,
- Learn from counterparts' best practices on how to establish an effective national teacher council.

Ultimately, the workshop aimed to set up a clear roadmap for the planned National Teacher Council in Uganda. Through the presentations by Ghana and Kenya, and the ensuing discussion and remarks from Uganda, it is clear that the map took shape during the workshop, and that stepping-stones were identified from the practices and lessons learned and shared by Ghana and Kenya.

Background

The workshop was necessitated by Uganda's intention to establish a National Teacher Council and learn from best practices from African countries. It was organized under the [Norwegian Teacher Initiative](#) (NTI), *Strengthening Multi-Partner Cooperation to Support Teacher Policy and Improve Learning*. The NTI aims to strengthen the cooperation among international organizations and partners to develop national teacher policies that positively impact teaching and learning, contributing to the realization of the teacher target in Sustainable Development Goal 4.c.

Furthermore, the workshop was informed by the [Teachers Initiative in Sub-Saharan Africa \(TISSA\)](#) study conducted in Uganda in 2013, which documented and analysed teacher-related issues in Uganda that negatively impact teaching, learning, and the quality of education. The study recommended the development of a National Teacher Policy to address these issues, which Uganda successfully achieved in 2019. Having a National Teacher Policy approved by Cabinet in Uganda is a crucial achievement, but must be considered not an end in itself, but a starting base for more comprehensive policies and structures to improve the quality of education. Among the most pressing priorities is the establishment of a National Teacher Council.

Introduction

Dr Binyam Sisay Mendisu, Program Officer at UNESCO IICBA, opened the webinar and invited Dr Yumiko Yokozeki, Director of UNESCO IICBA, to introduce the topic and set the tone. Dr Yokozeki greeted the participants and the officials from UNESCO and the MoES in Uganda, and encouraged the Ministry by praising its recent accomplishment of passing the National Teacher Policy. "The Ugandan Teacher Policy is a good one with social dialogue and teachers voices, which are well reflected and included." By emphasizing dialogue between teachers and the Ministry, Dr Yokozeki made clear the need to prioritize teachers' voices through such structures as the nascent National Teacher Council.

Dr Yokozeki also encouraged the officials from Ghana and Kenya by recognizing the value of their existing teacher councils. “Africa already has several vibrant and active teacher councils, and we can learn from their experiences,” said Dr Yokozeki. “This is the spirit of IICBA. We firmly believe in African solutions for African challenges.”

After Dr Yokozeki’s remarks, Mr Jonathan Kamwana, a Commissioner for Teacher Education in the MoES of Uganda, was invited to represent Uganda officially. Mr Kamwana spoke of the importance of this meeting, and expressed his hope that the invited teacher representatives from Uganda participate and work together to help make the National Teacher Council a reality. “I do believe that after this meeting, a lot is going to be done and we shall continue engaging each other to ensure that what was started can be achieved. This is a very good strategy for this country,” said Mr Kamwana.

Kenya’s Experience

Kenya shared its experience in operating its [Teachers Service Commission \(TSC\)](#). Ms Mary Rotich, Director of Field Services under the TSC Kenya, explained the role, structure, and functions of the Commission. The TSC, established by the Constitution in 2010, is the main governing body that regulates and manages the teaching profession in Kenya. It currently covers 332,792 teachers in 31,826 public schools. The TSC provides professional regulations and career progression guidelines for teachers, and acts as both a regulator and an employer of teachers. Among the functions of the TSC are recruiting, registering, deploying, evaluating, and promoting teachers; reviewing and enforcing standards; training candidates; and analysing the supply of and demand for teachers. “In performing these functions the Commission must at all times take into account the best interest of the learner,” said Ms Rotich. “This is a requirement so that all activities are premised on that requirement: that the child comes first.”

Of crucial importance to Uganda’s development of a National Teachers Council, Ms Rotich explained how Kenya mandated, strengthened, and institutionalized the TSC. The Commission is a protected and permanent structure, embedded in the legal and constitutional fabric of the country. It was given autonomy and authority by the law to fulfil its duties to learners and teachers. Many of its functions are centralised, but some are decentralised at county and institutional levels. Ms Rotich also emphasized the importance of setting up and using regulatory tools like registration and data collection, teacher appraisal processes, professional standards, and disciplinary procedures. On a final note, Ms Rotich offered to continue working with Uganda, suggesting a future for a mutually collaborative relationship between Kenya and Uganda.

Ghana's Experience

Mr Laurence Sarpong, Director of Professional Development at the [National Teaching Council of Ghana](#), described the role of this national teacher governing body. The National Teaching Council oversees more than 340,000 Ghanaian teachers and fulfils many of the same functions as the Kenyan Teachers Service Commission, such as exercising tools for registering, monitoring, preparing, and keeping records on teachers. Of chief significance to the teaching profession in Ghana, the Council created, between 2014 and 2017, [national teaching standards](#) that have led to a reformation in the pre- and in-service teacher training programs and institutes. "They all designed their curricula in line with the prescription of the standards...to ensure that in-service training is well coordinated and regulated," said Mr Sarpong. "We can ensure that pre-service and in-service training are compliant to these standards." The teaching standards include a focus on essential pillars of knowledge: knowledge of the curriculum, knowledge of learners, and knowledge of schools. "We believe that teachers who are mentored about these pillars can perform more effectively," stated Mr Sarpong.

Discussion

Dr Mendisu of UNESCO IICBA invited a prominent participant, Professor Steve Nwokeocha, Executive Director of [Africa Federation of Teaching Regulatory Authorities \(AFTRA\)](#), to comment on Uganda's intent to establish a national teacher council, as well as on the presentations made by Kenya and Ghana. Professor Nwokeocha called Uganda's initiative of the National Teacher Council and its achievement of a National Teacher Policy "milestones" in its path towards teacher professionalization and development. "It is most important for the law of a country to realize that the job of a teacher will not be done by someone who has not been evaluated, registered, and licensed," said Professor Nwokeocha.

He also praised the Kenyan teacher council model, commenting that Kenya and Sierra Leone have two of the strongest teacher councils in Africa. Echoing Dr Yokozeki's opening remarks about African solutions for African challenges, Professor Nwokeocha urged Uganda to refer to the African models rather than Western models for teacher councils, reasoning that the government-funded and -regulated model is a better fit for the African context than the Western decentralized, privatized model that separates teacher councils from the government. "I want Uganda to widen their scope and relate it to their local environment and look at what works for them, because there are many models in Africa, with their pros and cons," remarked Professor Nwokeocha. Ultimately, he said, "teacher councils need to be powerful, need to be well-funded, and need to have a good financial base" that does not depend on teachers' donations.

Question-and-Answer

The question-and-answer session was moderated by Mr Ismail Banduga, National Project Officer, UNESCO antenna office in Kampala. The session was enriched by detailed and specific questions from the participants and responses from the experts from Kenya and Ghana. A few themes are captured below.

Q.: What are the experiences of Kenya and Ghana in maintaining the accuracy of national data on teachers?

Dr Reuben Nthamburi, Director of Quality Assurance at the Teacher Service Commission (TSC), elaborated on Kenya's experience with management of teacher data. He explained that the TSC has a strong audit system and is aided by the centrality of its functions as both an employer and regulator. The TSC registers, vets, and interviews teachers as they graduate from pre-service training. Their information is maintained in document management systems that can be assessed quickly and digitally. "Data of the teachers is very critical," emphasized Dr Nthamburi. "It is audited by our auditors every other quarter so we can know which teachers have got in the service, which have exited, which have retired, and which have passed on."

Mr Laurence Sarpong of the National Teaching Council of Ghana similarly expressed the importance of data in regulating teachers. Like Kenya, Ghana also issues teachers a registration number upon graduation from teacher training institutes. Ghana then sends the teachers' data to the school employer, and then reviews it regularly.

Q.: How do the teacher councils in Kenya or Ghana work with teacher training institutes?

Ms Mary Rotich and Dr Nthamburi of the TSC in Kenya explained that the Commission and teacher training colleges are partners. Many of the instructors at teacher training colleges are employees of the TSC itself. Moreover, the TSC collaborates with colleges and the Kenyan Institute of Curriculum Development to set the curriculum for candidate teachers. Teacher development programs are reviewed every five years. It is a democratic, collaborative, dialogue-driven process.

Q. How do the national teacher councils ensure that teacher deployment is fair to underserved communities?

Mr Sarpong explained the role of the Ghanaian government to develop teacher policies in consultation with unions and employers, but does not include the recruitment and deployment of teachers. However, through their national teacher policy, the National Teaching Council can ensure that the employers create deployment policies that fairly distribute teachers to where they are most needed. In

Kenya, Ms Rotich acknowledged that equitable deployment is still an ongoing challenge, but that advertising about equity and a three-year commitment policy have done some good in getting teachers to stay in underserved communities.

Conclusion

On behalf of Ms Ann Therese Ndong Jatta, Director of UNESCO Regional Office for Eastern and Southern Africa, Ms Schéhérazade Feddal delivered closing remarks on the proceedings. Ms Feddal thanked the presenters and reflected on their points and the ensuing discussion. She then commented that the UNESCO Regional Office worked with the MoES in Uganda to develop the National Teacher Policy, and she encouraged Uganda's initiative of developing a National Teachers Council.

Finally, Mr Jonathan Kamwana of the MoES reflected on the learning and reiterated Uganda's aspirations. "We are committed to establishing a National Teachers Council. We are committed as a country; we are committed as a Ministry," he said. Uganda is currently drafting a bill to Parliament and putting into place an act which will eventually establish the council. The importance to Uganda is clear: "There is no education system that is better than the qualifications of its teachers," said Mr Kamwana. "Once we have quality teachers, we will have quality learning outcomes, and once we have quality learning outcomes, we shall improve the education of this country, and turn Uganda into a middle-income country."

The benchmarking workshop closed with Dr Mendisu from UNESCO IICBA offering to continue collaboration with Uganda in 2021. The Ugandan officials are now planning internal follow-ups and legislation for 2021.

For more information:

Click [here](#) to listen to a recording of this benchmarking workshop, and [here](#) to access other recordings from UNESCO IICBA's many recent workshops and trainings.

Click [here](#) to see the Teacher Service Commission of Kenya's PowerPoint Presentation from this benchmarking workshop, and [here](#) to access other resources from UNESCO IICBA's many recent workshops and trainings.

For questions or comments about this report, please contact the writer, Maryann Dreas-Shaikha, at mj.dreas@unesco.org.

Agenda

Time	Activities	Facilitator
December 17, 2020 Time 14.00- 15.30 East Africa Time		
14:00 - 14:02	Introduction of the agenda	Dr Binyam Sisay Mendisu Program Officer, UNESCO IICBA
14:02 - 14:05	Welcoming remarks	Dr Yumiko Yokozeki Director, UNESCO IICBA
14:05 - 14:10	Context and purpose of the workshop	Mr Jonathan Kamwana Commissioner, Teacher Instructor Education and Training Department, MoES, Uganda
14:10 - 14:55	The composition of a National Teacher Council, legal frameworks, and functions as a regulator of the teaching service: The case of Kenya (10 min)	Teacher Service Commission (TSC) – Kenya: Dr Reuben Nthamburi, Director, Quality Assurance
	The relationship between a National Teacher Council and Ministry of Education and other teacher stakeholders, e.g. teacher unions, etc. - Kenya (10 min)	Ms Mary Rotich, Director, Field Services
	Important things to consider in establishing a National Teacher Council: The case of Ghana Teacher Council (10 min) The functionality of a National Teacher Council: Reporting and financial resources - Ghana (10 min)	National Teaching Council - Ghana Mr Laurence Sarpong, Ag. Director, Professional Development
14:55 - 15:10	Discussion	Professor Steve Nwokeocha Executive Director, AFTRA
15:10 - 15:25	Q. & A., comments, and sharing of good practices	Mr Ismail Banduga National Project Officer, UNESCO Kampala
15:25 - 15:30	Closing remarks	Ms Schéhérazade Feddal, on behalf of Ms Ann Therese Ndong Jatta, Director of UNESCO Regional Office for Eastern and Southern Africa Mr Jonathan Kamwana, Commissioner, Teacher Instructor Education and Training Department, MoES, Uganda