

The African Union (AU) Continental Teacher Award 2021

Theme: “Revitalizing the Teaching Profession to Ensure Quality and Relevance
Amidst the Covid-19 Pandemic”

Event Report

30 November 2021 (3pm-6pm EAT)

Zoom

+60 Participants

Introduction

Tuesday, 30 November 2021, UNESCO International Institute for Capacity Building in Africa (UNESCO-IICBA), the coordinator of the Teacher Development CESA cluster, participated in the 3rd Continental Teacher Award Ceremony hosted by the African Union. The AU Teacher Prize has been established as a means for demonstrating respect for teachers and the teaching profession, by encouraging and celebrating the committed teachers in Africa. According to the AU, the Award raises the status of teaching, facilitates sharing of best practices in teacher excellence, and inspires the best possible candidates to join the teaching profession. Furthermore, the AU Teacher Award is meant to serve as a catalyst for similar programs at regional and national levels.

The Teacher Award is an important and valuable instrument that contributes to the success of Agenda 2063 and the Continental Education Strategy for Africa (CESA), with the following objectives:

- i. Enhance visibility and status of the Teacher in Africa at all levels - Pre-primary, Primary, Secondary, and Tertiary including TVET.
- ii. Promote Teaching as a profession at all levels.
- iii. Celebrate and encourage outstanding teachers.

The 3rd AU Teacher Award ceremony was organized by the African Union with the support of its key partners including the European Union and the CESA Teacher Development Cluster, which is coordinated by UNESCO-IICBA in collaboration with Education International (EI) and AFTRA among others. The award focused on those teaching both at the primary and secondary school levels.

Dr. Hambani Masheleni, HoD Education Division facilitated the ceremony.

Opening Session

The session moderator, Dr Mahama Ouedraoga, Director, ESTI, opened the session by welcoming everyone and stressed that teachers are really important and having good teachers is a key part that contributes to high-quality education, thus realizing Agenda 2063. He then invited the AU Commissioner to deliver her opening remarks.

In her opening remarks, **H.E Prof. Sarah Anyang Agbor**, AU Commissioner for HRST – AUC, thanked Member States, EU and all AU education partners for their support in the realization of this event and applauding the awardees.

She stressed the critical importance of teachers and teacher development. “Without teachers there would be no education, a teacher is seen as an engine of Agenda 2063, it is obvious that education cannot develop without focusing on the development of teachers and part of this teacher development is teacher mobility, teacher motivation framework, teacher qualification framework and teacher awards.” She mentioned.

She went on to say that the status given to teachers must shift from the current state of decline to a higher state. that teaching as a profession should not be seen as a career of last resort.

The commissioner mentioned that the celebration of the 3rd AU Teachers' Award also aims to raise the shield of the teaching profession in this ongoing wave of the COVID-19 pandemic and to discuss the cause of action by bringing together policy makers in training of teachers, Member States and Regional Economic Communities (RECs) to discuss the initiatives related to the professional development of teachers following the COVID-19 Pandemic.

Emphasizing the need to train and support teachers, she highlighted how the global crisis has been a time to learn how adaptable and resilient our education systems, policy makers, teachers, students and families can be. She thanked all African countries that supported teachers with remote teaching and learning.

The Commissioner called on all AU Member States, education partners and policy makers to commit to strengthening teacher development in Africa. "Realizing Africa's potential and aspirations depends on the investments that are being made today in teacher development in Africa, as it is clear that the teacher is at the heart of education for the Africa we want." She said.

"Through well-trained, respected and supported teachers, learners are able to think critically, they are able to make choices as well as to acquire desirable values, attitudes, competencies and skills to contribute to the continent's vision of integration and prosperity, and able to compete to the global arena." Said the commissioner closing her remark.

In his remarks **Mr. Thomas Huyghebaert**, Head of policy and Development Cooperation, EU Delegation to AUC, appreciated the leadership of the Commissioner, he also congratulated the awardees for their outstanding contribution to improving quality of teaching and said that their good practices are exemplary to all teachers in Africa and an inspiration to the future teachers.

Mr. Thomas added that high quality; motivated and valued teachers are at the heart of excellent education but declining prestige of the profession and shortages are challenges in many countries. "In a fast-changing world, the role of teachers and the expectations placed upon them are evolving too as they face the challenges of new skills requirement, rapid technological developments, and increasing social and cultural diversity." He underlined.

He stressed the call on all education stakeholders to join forces to improve the resilience of Africa's education systems. He said, "The time to act is now, and teachers are at the center of these efforts, especially in bringing transformative impact on Africa's education system and sustaining it to better adapt and respond to the impacts of the pandemic."

He shared the great partnership between Africa and the EU in area of education as well as good practices that EU in partnership with AUC have been implementing, including the development of African Continental Qualification Framework.

"Without proper investment, management, training, and continuous professional development of teachers, it is not possible to provide students with the foundational skills they need to learn and succeed." Mr. Thomas mentioned.

Dr. Njora Hungi, Senior Project Officer, on behalf of **Dr. Yumiko Yokozeki**, Director of UNESCO IICBA, expressed the gratitude of UNESCO-IICBA and all members of the CESA Teacher Development Cluster for being associated with the 3rd AU Teachers' Award, and congratulated the Award winners.

Echoing the need to appreciate the excellent work done by teachers, he said; "Each of us have fond memories of our favorite teacher (s) who have greatly influenced our career, lifestyle or other lifestyle choices."

He highlighted the excellent work and efforts made by teachers in Africa after the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 to ensure the continuation of quality learning, thereby minimizing the risk of amplifying existing inequalities.

Dr. Hungi concluded with reassurance that UNESCO IICBA and the CESA Teacher Development Cluster at large, will continue to make every effort to contribute to the improvement of the teaching profession in Africa - including supporting development of policies to improve working conditions for teachers, developing the capacities of

teachers to adapt to change. “It is only this way that we will achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) as well as the objectives of the Continental Education Strategy for Africa (CESA)”, he concluded.

Testimony from three winners of 2020 AU Teacher Award:

Mr **Caseley Olabode Stephens**, Policy Officer - Education, HRST, AUC, moderator of the next session invited the 2020 Award winners for their testimony after being recognized as Teacher Champions. They all thanked the AUC and its partners for this initiative and all their work to improve the teaching profession. Among all the 2020 Awardees, the career has developed after receiving the AU award and they are ready to go the extra mile together with the new winners.

Mr. Olalekan Adeeko Ademola, Nigeria, took the opportunity to do more. After being awarded, in his own school, he increased the furniture for his classroom and developed a device that helped the school in the form of an online library with many open educational resources. He has also created a platform that brings together teachers from all over the world to collaborate and work together in accordance with the objectives of the AU.

Ms. Theodosia Oppong Lartegy Ghana, after being awarded, had the opportunity to partner with districts where they encourage and support girls to continue their education from middle school to high school. She was also promoted to the level of Deputy Director. Being rewarded also encouraged his students to aim to become the best.

Dr Livhalani Bridget Sinyosi, South Africa, said that being awarded made her the center of attraction, her country was very proud and many wanted her to guide them. After being rewarded, she worked to receive a doctorate diploma. From 2021, she started mentoring people. She was also promoted to the school Manager. She mentioned that the AU Teachers Award allows people to see leadership in teachers.

Award Ceremony

Congratulating the winners of the 2021 AU Teachers' Prize, Dr Hambani Masheleni shared that they had received a number of nominations from across the continent and thanked all for expressing their interest in the program and showing that Africa can develop the teaching profession, bring it up to standard and make it a beautiful one.

Dr. Hambani Masheleni announced the six awardees of AU teacher Award 2020. And invited them to introduce themselves. All the Awarded Teachers introduced themselves and gave a short remark.

- Mrs. Goria-Jugnarain Venisha, Mauritius, East Africa
- Mr. Shivkrishnasingh Ramruchaya, Seychelles, East Africa
- Mrs. Agnes Segaka Rasesemola, South Africa
- Mr. Masego Serumola, Botswana, Southern Africa
- Ms. Pingdrewinde O. Ouedraogo, Burkina Faso, West Africa
- Professeur Assane Ndiaye, Senegal, West Africa
- Professeur Françoise Ngouzoumandji Nee Saidou, Central Africa Republic
- Mrs. Hanan Ibrahim Hafez, Egypt, North Africa
- Mr. Hamza Ghodhbane, Tunisia, North Africa

Panel discussion with the Awarded Teachers

In this session, Dr Njora Hungi, Senior Project Officer, UNESCO-IICBA, invited the 2021 winners to discuss the theme of the day: “Revitalizing Teaching Profession to Ensure Quality and Relevance Amidst the Covid-19 Pandemic”. They shared what motivates them as teachers, their experiences with school closings and openings due to COVID 19 pandemic, and their perspectives on the development of the teaching profession.

Mr. Masego Serumola and all the other award winners said their love for children keeps them motivated as teachers. During school closings in Botswana, Mr. Serumola used social media platforms and other communication tools like phone calls to stay in touch with his students. He shared good practices put in place by the government to ensure safe reopening of schools, such as training on how to implement teaching and learning activities in compliance with health measures. he stressed the need for teachers to be trained in the use of ICT and to provide them with psychological support and counseling sessions to be mentally fit to deal with situations such as the pandemic Covid-19 crisis in the future.

Mr. Hamza Ghodhbane, also during school closings, used technological tools to keep in touch with his students. With the support of some organizations, he bought tablets for some students who couldn't afford them so he could stay in touch with them. He recommends that teachers, students and parents be trained in distance education to prepare for any other similar crisis and that children should also be made aware of the use of ICT tools from an early age.

Emphasizing the importance of community participation in the education of children in Africa, **Professor Assane Ndiaye** shared an African proverb saying: "it takes a whole village to educate a child". She stressed that after this crisis linked to the COVID 19 pandemic, Education and Vocational Training call for superficial and in-depth changes or even profound upheavals to ensure better resilience, a good sharing of good practices is also necessary to ensure lasting resilience in the face of this pandemic.

Ms. Hanan Ibrahim Hafez, as a trainer in computer science and computer skills, when schools closed, she began to spread the culture of technology, she trained teachers to prepare and conduct online courses. "What people desperately need are opportunities to team up and find courses of action that can deepen learning for students and teachers and engage in new ways of learning that that result in better outcomes". She mentioned.

Ms. Pingdrewinde O. Ouedraogo, shared that what made it possible to ensure pedagogical continuity in Burkina Faso was the establishment of Radio and TV education which broadcast standardized courses according to the programs. She stressed that member states must review working conditions and guarantee the safety of teachers in their environment given the security crisis in some countries.

Professeur Françoise Ngouzoumandji Nee Saidou, shared that regarding the Central Africa Republic, they did not have the possibility of doing online courses like in other countries, but they did sensitization on radio and TV to encourage students to revise their classes and also the parents to motivate them. The biggest challenge faced is the readjustment of the school calendar. The only support received from the government specifically from the education ministry is the barrier test kits. She echoed the importance of recognizing and training teachers for their exceptional roles.

Mrs. Agnes Segaka Rasesemola, in South Africa, schools were closed but learning continued and all teachers including Mrs. Agnes were teaching. She also mentioned the need for all schools to be encouraged to have an ICT implementation plan.

Mrs. Gooria-Jugnarain Venisha, said that in Mauritius, social media platforms were used to keep in touch with students during school closure. They also to provide mental wellbeing support to students. She recommended inclusion of psychology as part of the curriculum to prepare the mind to cope and adapt to changes quickly (both teachers and students).

Mr. Shivkrishnasingh Ramruchaya, like most teachers, used group meetings and WhatsApp zoom to reach his students, colleagues and parents. In Seychelles, while the school was closed, education was not a priority as the tourism industry was hit the hardest. Using LCP and his phone, Mr. Ramruchaya began making home videos on the subject explored at the time. Students who did not have internet were able to get these videos recorded by their friends. But the main challenge for him was how to manage and assess student performance. He also echoed the need to empower teachers, students and parents to effectively use technology to access online platforms.

Closing remarks

In his closing remarks, Dr. Mahama Ouedraogo, Director of Department of ESTI, thanked AU member states, the AU education division and education stakeholders for their contribution to the realization of this event. He echoed the importance of a teacher, the need for the improvement of their living and working conditions as a prerequisite for an effective education system today and tomorrow within the framework of CESA and the SDG4. He thanked all awarded teachers for their passion in teaching, their dedication, innovation, and efforts to contribute to the development of Africa. He stressed the need to invest in teachers to ensure quality education accessible for all. He also called upon member states to continue implementing the outcome of the report on living and working condition of teachers.

ANNEX:

The Teacher Prize contributes to the success of Agenda 2063 and the Continental Education Strategy for Africa (CESA), with the following objectives:

1. Enhance visibility and status of the Teacher in Africa at all levels, Pre-primary, Primary, Secondary, and Tertiary including TVET;
2. Promote Teaching as a first-choice profession at all levels; and
3. Celebrate and encourage outstanding teachers based on the following:
 - a. Performance of students
 - b. Utilization of innovative education delivery approaches, methodologies, and instruments.
 - c. Positive influence in the community and the school.
 - d. Positive support to fellow staff.
 - e. Commitment to passing on values to students.
 - f. Positive engagement with parents.
 - g. High moral standards.

Selection process:

The Teacher prize was identified through Calls for Participation at local and international levels. The selection process at country levels has involved public officials, teachers, academics, journalists, entrepreneurs, company directors, scientists, and entertainment industry figures in Africa.

The following criteria will determine winners:

- Engaging in quality teaching which is focused on student achievement (including social outcomes) and enables high standards of student outcomes for varied groups of students.
- Visible achievement in the knowledge of the subject matter, and encouragement of good behaviour and learning through positive comments and actions.
- Employing variety of modalities to structure the class for quality learning process, and regardless of how students learn, are connected to the lesson for high standards.
- Employing pedagogical practices that enable classes and other learning groupings to work as caring, inclusive, and cohesive learning communities.
- Engaging in effective and efficient links that are created between school and other cultural contexts in which students are socialized, to facilitate learning and responsive to students learning processes.
- Achieving multiple task contexts support learning cycles, curriculum goals, task design, teaching and school practices that are effectively aligned to pedagogy scaffolds which provides appropriate feedback on students' task engagement.
- Achieving teacher' and students' engagement in constructive goal-oriented assessment necessary to reach the present and future educational goals of the students or to reach the students' full potential.
- Helping students to achieve their long-term intellectual needs by providing new materials to gain new insights or to open new channels of intellectual stimulation or to enhanced student's essential and creative thinking power.

For the 2021 edition of the African Union Continental Teacher Awards, prizes of **\$10 000** each and a **certificate** of recognition were awarded to nine teachers selected as champions in ensuring quality education in Africa.

If you have any questions or comments regarding this event Report, please do not hesitate to contact Uwingabiye Immaculee Kevine at ik.uwingabiye@unesco.org. You can also see updates and resources from a variety of IICBA events and programs on its website: <http://www.iicba.unesco.org/> and its Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/iicba>