

Interview with

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of the Policy Unit in the Ministry of
Education in Ghana



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Interview conducted by Daniel Ergetachew, Gabriel Mekbib, and Kaoru Yamauchi

IICBA: Thank you so much for joining us. Would you please tell us your name, your organization, and what it is that you do.

Thank you for having me. My name is Inusah Shirazu. I work for the Ministry of Education in the Republic of Ghana as a policy planner.

IICBA: What are you regularly working on?

I am head of the policy planning unit, and my day-to-day activities involve policy planning, reviewing of programmes such as GPE projects, assisting agencies, reviewing documentation on policy proposals and also supporting the capacity of the Ministry in terms of policy formulation and planning.

IICBA: What is the most interesting or rewarding part of your job?

It is rewarding because we feel the impact immediately based on the policies that we formulate and the work plans, whether they are medium-term plans or annual action plans, that we provide to agencies in terms of programming implementation.

It is especially rewarding, when at the end of the year, we evaluate students and realize that learning is improving. That is where we gain a lot of satisfaction because we see the contribution we make to ensure that every child in Ghana has access to quality education.

IICBA: What was your motivation for getting involved in education?

To provide some background, in Ghana, once you are employed by the government as a civil servant, an assessment of your qualities is conducted followed by an analysis of the skills gaps in government offices. Then the office of the Head of Civil Service assigns civil servants to a Ministry based on assessed needs.

Prior to the Ministry of Education, I worked in the Ministry of Local Government, where my work entailed the supervision of sub-national structures, which, as part of their mandate, includes providing quality education.

I was asked to go to the Ministry of Education a year ago, and saw it as a new challenge because I knew we were going to impact the lives of every household in Ghana. Education is so vital that we cannot achieve any aspect of

Geographic Coverage of the KIX Africa 19 Hub



The KIX Africa 19 Hub comprises the following 19 partner countries in Anglophone Africa: Eritrea, Eswatini, Ethiopia, The Gambia, Ghana, Kenya, Lesotho, Liberia, Malawi, Mozambique, Nigeria, Rwanda, Sierra Leone, Somalia (Somaliland and Puntland), South Sudan, Tanzania (mainland and Zanzibar), Uganda, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

This interview is part of a series conducted in May 2023 on the occasion of the inception meeting held in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, for the extension (phase 2) of the KIX Africa 19 Hub project. The transcript of this interview has been slightly edited versus the video version, which is also available on the UNESCO IICBA website.

The Global Partnership for Education's (GPE) and the International Development Research Center (IDRC) Knowledge and Innovation Exchange (KIX) project aims to meet the needs of national education systems for evidence-based policy. KIX creates spaces for GPE partner countries to share information, innovations, and good practices. Knowledge exchange is facilitated by four regional hubs, including two for Africa: the KIX Africa 21 Hub which covers francophone and lusophone GPE-eligible countries and the KIX Africa 19 Hub which covers anglophone countries. Both hubs function as regional fora within the framework of the KIX project to bring together countries with similar educational, socio-economic and linguistic characteristics for exchanges of experiences.



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the Sustainable Development Goals without education. I see education as not just a service, but also an enabler to ensure that Ghana attains the economic development we all desire. So, these are my motivations, and when I had a chance to go to the Ministry of Education, I was beaming with a smile.

IICBA: What are the biggest challenges in the education sector in your country?

I would not categorize them as challenges. In Ghana, we are working towards improving every aspect of our education because we believe that there is always room to perfect any educational programme and policy that we are implementing in the country. So instead, I would rather look at those key areas that we can perfect to ensure we achieve the desired results for learning outcomes.

Number one is gender parity in our education system. Available data indicates that Ghana has achieved some level of parity at the national level, but if you go beyond the headline news, you will notice that we have disparities

at regional and district levels. So, this is the area we can work on to ensure that every girl and every boy in Ghana has access to quality education. Still, on the issue of gender inclusion, it should be ensured that the special needs of boys and girls are taken into consideration in the development of our infrastructure and curriculum.

Another significant area that I want to see more improvement in — is inclusive education for all people with any form of disability and with any form of need. So currently, we are working on an inclusive education policy that will ensure that children with any disability or any special needs are given attention. Our education system is constructed to ensure that these learners feel like they are part of the system and they receive the training that they require for their development and for the development of our nation.

IICBA: How do you feel progress is being made on these two priority areas?

We are working on two major policies — 1) gender education policy and 2) inclusive education policy.

For gender education policy, we can achieve the desired results when, first and foremost, we try to unravel the challenge of girls being excluded in the classroom, especially in those parts of Ghana where we are not achieving the parity that we desire. It could be a result of social or cultural norms, it could be a result of economic factors. It could be any factor. It is not appropriate to generalize when conditions are not the same in a particular locality. There may be a set of conditions which are different from one locality to the next. This gender education policy seeks to identify all these issues and ensure that we fashion appropriate programmes and appropriate targeting to ensure that we get all the girls back to school.

This specific targeting also applies for our inclusive education policy that addresses people living with any form of disability. The infrastructure, the tools and even the teaching methods should consider the specific special needs of a child. We can do that once we get every stakeholder on board. Stakeholders in Ghana are responding very well to our call. Anytime we try to engage them, we receive their support and the input that we require from them.

IICBA: What is something that your education sector has learned or is doing well that you feel should be shared with other countries?

One initiative that we have been able to boldly implement is the free Senior High School programme (SHS). This is a programme rolled out by the government in 2017 and involves the government absorbing the cost of secondary education in Ghana for every child. It is not targeted, so for every Ghanaian child going to Senior High School – whether it is tuition, boarding, feeding – all costs are absorbed by the government. Not many countries in Africa have this kind of programme. Another aspect of this programme is the fact that it is 100% financed by the Government of Ghana. We do not rely on any development partner to support with the funding.

Under the leadership of our current minister, Honourable Dr. Yaw Osei Adutwum, the programme is expanding. Of course, when you launch a programme afresh, there are bound to be some minor challenges, and under his leadership, we have welcomed and overcome these minor challenges.

With the free Senior High School programme, there are 1.3 million people currently in Ghana, who have access to free secondary education. Without free Senior High School, it is likely many learners could not have that enhanced access to secondary education. The data is there. The impact is significant, not just in terms of access, but even if you consider learning outcomes measured by the proportion of Senior High School students who are qualifying for

entry to tertiary education. Over the years, it has improved significantly, so this is one programme that Ghana stands to share with other countries within the region.

Of course, there are many challenges that we have encountered in the implementation of free Senior High School program. A significant issue was due to the high demand, we needed to put in place a double track system about two/three years ago. We had to have a first track entering at a particular period with another track entering at a different period. We are in a position to share our experiences with countries interested in rolling out this program so they can learn from our strategies and plans.

IICBA: Which of the KIX themes is your government currently prioritizing the most?

The Ministry is familiar with the six themes that KIX is working on and is comfortable with the topic areas. Our Minister is a strong advocate for early childhood education. We also focus on teacher professionalism and issues of gender. So, these themes would be the driving force for any engagement that we will have with KIX in the future. Additionally, in the early part of this year, our Minister approved the national dialogue programme where we have discussed incorporating these aforementioned themes in the planning for the event.

IICBA: How important is new/recent research and evidence to your area of responsibility? How do you use it?

As a policy planner, I need data to inform the proposals and suggestions that I share with my bosses on the importance to have a discussion or engagement on a particular area. A lot of the evidence or the data required comes from research.

It is not just enough to rely on educational management information systems (EMIS). EMIS is very good, but sometimes you need external information or data either from research, from census or other sources to build a comprehensive database of evidence to convince policymakers that a particular area needs urgent attention.

Through research and other available information, we have observed the limitations of our current gender and inclusive education systems. The data suggest we roll out these policies to ensure that a diverse and broad segment of society are included in our education system.

IICBA: Do you have any requests for KIX Africa 19?

First and foremost, in the Ministry of Education in Ghana, we have a research agenda, and our research agenda looks at our focus areas. Based on our Education Strategic Plan (2018-2030) and then our medium-term plan, we will develop an agenda for research including TVET, STEM,

Early Childhood Education, teacher professionalism and gender. We have a comprehensive agenda.

KIX can support by complementing the work of the national level research agenda. During the Inception KIX 2.0 meeting, I observed potential areas of collaboration in this area. Research should inform policy, performance and monitoring. It should also reflect the evaluation of how government policies and programmes are being implemented. So that is the area where I think that we can work closely with KIX to ensure that the national-level research agenda is also being implemented.

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