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## AFRICAN CONTINENTAL FRAMEWORK OF STANDARDS AND COMPETENCIES: RETHINKING TEACHER COMPETENCY IN KENYA

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### ABSTRACT

*The paper provides information on global Trends on Professional Teaching Standards and Professional Development of Teachers, Rethinking Teacher Competency in Kenya, how to enhance Teacher Competencies in Kenya, Teacher Competence Framework for teachers in Kenya, Teacher Competency, pursuit of professional standards in standards-based Teacher Professional Development and Teacher Competence and teaching quality. Thinking Teacher Competency in Kenya paper provides the journey being taken in Kenya to professionalize the teaching service. The extent of the spread in the development of professional teaching standards for teachers in different regions in the world is clearly analysed in this paper. Teacher competencies are characterized by two main features. Firstly, they emphasize outcomes: what the student should know and be able to do. The second key characteristic of CBET is relevance. The focus is not on knowledge for knowledge's sake, but on how that knowledge can be used. Kenya developed Professional Teaching Standards framework based on the results of a survey study on teacher professional development practices in Kenya. To enhance teacher competence, a comprehensive teacher professional development programme was developed based on the seven (7) Kenya Professional Teaching Standards (KePTS). The professional standards clearly provide the public with the information on what teachers must know and be able to do during teaching since as per the adage "you can only give what you have". The standards therefore provide a tool to the public to focus on accountability, performance and compliance of teachers.*

### INTRODUCTION

The discourse on teacher competency has dominated educational policy in teaching, learning, and assessment in the last two decades. Hattie (2003) identified that whilst students have the highest impact on their own learning, teachers play the next significant role. With an increased focus on the quality of teaching, calls for definitions of teacher competency and measures to demonstrate quality performance have increased the appetite and momentum for professional standards and professional development for teachers (Ingvarson, Reid, Buckley, Kleinhenz, Masters, Rowley (Sept, 2014).

Regional international organizations like African Union are in the forefront urging its member states to develop comprehensive framework of teacher competency and standards that can be used to measure teacher output and to position the teaching profession on the same or higher level with other traditional and modern professions (AU, 2019). To that end, the African Union developed a comprehensive African Continental Framework of Standards and Competences in 2018 (AU, 2019). The overarching aim of the Framework is CESA 16-25 Strategic Objective 1 which is to: "Revitalize the teaching profession to ensure quality and relevance at all levels of education" (African Union, 2016b). The primary purpose of the framework is to define the level of knowledge, practice, values, ethics and

conduct expected of teachers and school leaders in the dispensation of their professional tasks. The framework serves as a baseline of common reference among member states of the African Union with regards to standards and competencies in the teaching profession. It does not seek to impose standards and competencies on Member States but to guide, motivate and inspire the various jurisdictions to adopt international best practices which can enhance inter-operability and mutual cooperation for the benefit of Member States. It also encompasses initial teacher education, teaching practice, induction, and mentoring, and up to continuous professional development, progression along the career pathway and fulfilment of professional regulatory policies and practices, all of which together constitute what is known as teacher qualification in its broadest sense. Nwokeocha (2022).

A number of African nations including Kenya have adopted a proactive promotion of country specific framework of teacher competency as a way of creating an environment that redefines the persons who practice teaching and the position of the teaching profession in the society. The frameworks are developed through programmes of educational reforms with the goal of improving student learning outcomes (Chitty, 2004). Most of the policies on teacher competency defines it from three perspectives: entry requirements to teacher training institutions including universities; pre-service teacher training programmes, and continuous professional development of teachers (Australian Institute, 2011; European Commission, 2017). Teachers service commission in its strategic plan(2019-2022) sought to ensure quality of the teacher at entry, effective induction and in-service programmes, supervision and reliable appraisal systems at all levels. It focuses on establishing a framework to guide entry and performance standards expected in the teaching service, and regulation of professional development and ethical conduct of teachers engaged both in public and private learning institutions.

This paper, explores global Trends on Professional Teaching Standards and Professional Development of Teachers, Rethinking Teacher Competency in Kenya, how to enhance Teacher Competencies in Kenya, Teacher Competence Framework for teachers in Kenya, Teacher Competency, pursuit of professional standards in standards-based Teacher Professional Development and Teacher Competence and teaching quality. The paper therefore responds to the sub theme “African Continental Framework of Standards and Competencies: Rethinking Teacher Competency”.

## **GLOBAL TRENDS ON PROFESSIONAL TEACHING STANDARDS AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT OF TEACHERS**

Globally, countries are increasingly focusing on the provision of high-quality teaching as a reflection of the shift in teacher competency demands (Dowrick, 2002). Most countries therefore, have developed professional standards for teachers as a cog in improving teacher quality.

Professional standards as used in the teaching profession is a framework or criteria that can be used to measure of teacher’s competency. Professional standards and competency frameworks are documents that depict in specific terms the professional knowledge, skills, attitudes and values that define a good teacher. Many countries have developed professional standards competency frameworks for teachers with the conviction that the standards will raise the quality of teaching (Schleicher,2011). Table 1 provides a picture of the extent of the spread in the development of professional teaching standards for teachers in different regions in the world.

**Table 1: National Professional Standards Competency Frameworks in some Countries**

Country	Existence of National professional teaching standards for Teachers	Number of Standards
Australia	Yes	7
Brazil	No	
Canada (Ontario)	No (different states have different standards e.g Ontario , Alberta)	5 ( Ontario)
China	Yes	3 (with several domain)
England	Yes	8
Ethiopia	Yes	5
Korea	No	
Ghana	Yes	7
Nigeria	Yes	4
Liberia	Yes	5
Egypt	Yes	5
New Zealand	Yes	7
Namibia	Yes	6
Philippines	Yes	7
USA (California)	No (different states have different standards e.g., Ohio, California)	6 (California)
Kenya	Yes	7

(Source: OECD, 2013, MoE, Ghana, MoE Nigeria)

The table shows that the practice of developing and using the professional standards and competency frameworks cut across the world. It should be noted that the purpose for the Competency frameworks for teachers differ from one country to the other. However, the common thread in different countries, is the belief that the professional standards and associated competencies lead to improved learning outcome.

### **RETHINKING TEACHER COMPETENCY IN KENYA**

To successfully facilitate development of competencies desirable of their learners, teachers ought to equally develop a wide range of overlapping competencies to enable them navigate the complexity of teaching (Jackson, 1990; Weddel, 2006). Competencies are also referred to as Standards in many contexts globally including the United States, UK, Australia, and New-Zealand (MoE 2009). A Teacher Competency Framework developed by the MoE states that:

There is an increased interest in competency based approaches in Sub-Saharan Africa and competency frameworks for teachers have also been developed in many other countries including Nigeria, South Africa, Namibia, Senegal, Liberia, Rwanda, Egypt and Algeria (Pg.5).

In general, teacher competencies are characterized by two main features. Firstly, they emphasize outcomes: what the student should know and be able to do. Rather than education being focused on what the teacher thinks students should know (teacher-focused), it looks at learning from the point of view of student performance (student focused), making as clear as possible what should be achieved and the standards for measuring that achievement.

The second key characteristic of CBET is relevance. The focus is not on knowledge for knowledge's

sake, but on how that knowledge can be used. Such an approach has an obvious appeal for teacher education. Across the globe, traditional teacher education courses have frequently been criticised for their lack of relevance in terms of the gap between theoretical preparation and actual classroom practice. In such cases, competency-based approaches which emphasise “knowledge in use” in terms of how a teacher performs in the classroom setting are clearly important.

Kenya has developed a Teacher education framework (2016) which stipulates that the teacher trainees will be expected to be conversant with the following Teacher Education Competencies: Communication and Collaboration; Self-Efficacy; Creativity and Innovation; Critical Thinking and Problem solving; Learning to learn and Reflective Practice; Digital Literacy skills: Pedagogical Content Knowledge, Assessment and Citizenship and Leadership.

### **HOW TO ENHANCE TEACHER COMPETENCIES IN KENYA**

According to Orji (2007) teaching consists of series of activities that one engages in a bid to bring about desirable change in the behaviour of the learner. Teachers’ professional development program is considered to play an important role in enhancing teacher competencies. The issue of teacher competence or what we can refer to as teacher effectiveness and quality of instruction has been of great concern to all stakeholders in the education industry. According to Urevbu (2006) teacher competencies are the knowledge, skills and values which a teacher possesses.

He further stated that they are tools of teaching. Research found that pedagogic competencies and professional competencies have become the basic formulation for learning materials that are taught in the program. Stronge (2018) argued that the teachers’ qualities should cover five specific characteristics of teacher responsibilities and behaviors as follow:(1) the teacher as a good personality representation; (2) the teacher as a good classroom manager and organizer; (3) the teacher as a good instructor; (4) the teacher monitors students’ progress and potential; (5) the teacher possesses professionalism. Fulan (2001) argued that "significant educational change consists of changes in beliefs, teaching style and materials which can come about only through a process of personal development in a social context" (p. 124). The professional development program is perceived to be beneficial in enhancing the teachers' competencies. To implement a professional development program, the stakeholder should consider the following two aspects, the financial aspect, and the demography aspect. To enhance competence and quality of classroom instruction by the teacher, several strategies need to be put in place:

- i. Ensuring quality control and monitoring. Close monitoring of the teacher performance in line with the programme objectives and performance in the classroom should be highly emphasized so as to enhance competence and quality of instruction.
- ii. Assessment and Evaluation measures need to be included in the teaching profession, where continuous feedback from the classroom will enable practitioners and programme executors know what is happening in the field. Students’ evaluation or assessment of their teachers could be used to perform this task.

### **TEACHER COMPETENCE FRAMEWORK FOR TEACHERS IN KENYA**

Teacher competence, as defined by competency frameworks, has become a new paradigm governing the implementation of pre-service training, in-service professional development, evaluation and promotion of teachers across a range of countries and regions(European Commission, 2018; OECD,

2009). In Kenya, the development of the Kenya Professional Teaching Standards framework was based on the results of a survey study on teacher professional development practices in Kenya (TSC,2016). To enhance teacher competence, a comprehensive teacher professional development programme was developed based on the Kenya Professional Teaching Standards (KePTS).

Kenya Professional Teaching Standards (KePTS) as captured in Table 2, provide a coherent framework for teacher competencies in terms of knowledge, skills, attitude and values that enhance learning outcomes (TPD Policy, 2016). Hamilton, & Murray (2016) identifies teacher professional standards as a key factor in improving teacher quality.

**Table 2: Kenya Professional Teaching Standards**

Standard No. 1: Teacher Promotes Professionalism throughout their Career
<i>Standard 2: Teacher has Pedagogical Content Knowledge and understanding of competency-based Curriculum and how to implement it.</i>
Standard 3: Teacher has knowledge on assessment and reporting
<i>Standard 4: Teacher Knows how to Create and Support Inclusive Education Practices</i>
<i>Standard 5: Teacher Knows and Promotes Comprehensive School Health and Safety</i>
Standard 6: The Teacher has Knowledge of Financial Literacy Skills
Standard 7: The Teacher Knows and Promotes Instructional Leadership and Administration

**TEACHER COMPETENCY: A PURSUIT OF PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS IN STANDARDS-BASED TEACHER PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT.**

The purpose for developing a set of professional teaching standards for teachers is to clearly articulate the specialist nature of teaching. In Kenya, the Commission developed the framework of the professional standards for teachers and instructional leaders in 2016 (TSC TPD Policy, 2018). Since then all service providers of TPD in the country have aligned in- service trainings and workshops to address at least one of the seven standards in the framework. But for the contracted TPD service providers, they are expected to plan their professional learning activities for teachers and instructional leaders in a way that targets all the seven standards in the framework Through the provision of continuous professional development to teachers and instructional leaders based on the seven professional standards, the Commission hopes to see significant improvement in the quality of teaching and student’s learning outcomes. The thinking of the Commission is supported by the argument of (Sachs, 2015)that the introduction of professional standards is more likely to improve teacher performance, quality of teaching and the standing of the teaching profession in the society.

In rethinking teacher competency, the Commission submits that insightful framework of professional standards should be the driving force behind professional learning programmes for teachers for improved teacher competency. Many potential benefits of teacher competency frameworks that based on professional standards have been advanced, including: fitness to teach; the legitimacy of the teaching profession (validation of teaching profession; and their potential to improve the quality of teaching by setting clear standards and assessing performance against them hence determining career development of teachers and instructional leaders (Australian Institute,2011; Kleinhenz & Ingvarson, 2007).

### **Fitness to Teach**

The teacher competency standards have various uses in different part of the world. But one common use is in determining the “fitness to teach” for teachers in New Zealand, in order to “protect the quality of teaching and gain full registration status” (Education Council of New Zealand, 2017), teachers are expected to demonstrate their competencies in the use of the national teaching standards. In United Kingdom, the competency standards are used to establish and ensure a minimum standard of teaching and conduct (Department of Education, 2014). The focus on professional development in China is usually about “...changing the knowledge, skills, beliefs, and attitude” (Timperley, Wilson, Barrar & Fung, 2007). In Kenya, the competency standards are used for the recertification of teachers after every five years. Teachers are. expected to enroll for TPD and earn TPD points based on the mastery of the competencies in the 7 KePTS. Ongoing discourse is whether the competencies captured under each standard, should form the basis of teacher registration.

### **Validation of Teaching Profession**

According to Sachs (2003), professional standard is one of the ways teachers can use to provide evidence to stakeholders of their achievements and accreditation. Professional standards for teachers are ways of sharing the aspect of teacher quality in terms of knowledge, skills, attitude and values, a professional teacher should demonstrate while performing his /her official duty. In USA, the primary objective of professional standards is to “...upgrade the status of teaching to a profession” (Cochran-Smith & Zeichner, 2009). How then do we improve the public perception on teaching service? One way is by sharing the professional standards for teachers and instructional leaders with the public to build the stakeholders’ confidence in the profession. The professional standards clearly provide the public with the information on what teachers must know and be able to do during teaching since as per the adage “you can only give what you have”. The standards therefore provide a tool to the public to focus on accountability, performance and compliance of teachers. In order to improve the public perception on teaching service better progression opportunities, salaries and other fringe benefits, can be enhanced to make it become very attractive

### **Career Growth in Teaching Profession**

Sachs (2005) submits that one of the uses of professional standards is in career Standards used for career development, it will actively seek to develop a teacher’s professional judgment at the individual level, providing opportunity for pedagogy and classroom practices. (Sacks, 2005).Equally important, is the use of professional standards as part of a system of professional learning and growth (Mayer et al., 2005). In this way, professional standards can provide a framework for professional learning that can be used by educators in planning their professional development activities as they advance throughout their careers (Forde et al., 2016). In Kenya, the professional standard and competencies are linked to the career progression. of a teacher (Teachers Service Commission,2016). Teachers are categorized into 6 competency levels depending on their experiences and competencies against the appropriate descriptors for a particular level. A level one teacher is one who has served for at least 5 years and displays mastery of knowledge on the seven standards in KePTS. A level two teacher is expected to demonstrate high level of application of the standards in their work. At the highest level, level 6, the teacher is an instructional leader in the seven standards and demonstrates such mastery through capacity building others, carry out research on the standards and presenting academic papers on the standards at local and international conferences.

## **TEACHER COMPETENCE AND TEACHING QUALITY**

Researchers tend to disagree on the benefits of professional standards and associated competencies, as some see them as useful ways of clarifying processes and expectations while others consider them a means of tightening regulations (Forde et al, 2016). Ingvarson (1998) argues that professional standards can become the basis of a "professional development system", through which teachers are encouraged "to create a strong sense of ownership for its quality". Miller et al., (2017; Robertson, (2016), argues that most professional standards are constructed on the assumption of a linear correlation between professional development and student performance. Critics have complained that such professional standards frameworks serve to deskill teachers and perpetuate cultural reproduction (Hattam & Smyth, 1995; Louden & Wallace, 1993), restricting teachers' professional growth, rather than transforming and extending it (Whitty, 1994) hence not improving teacher quality. It has also been contended that competence frameworks constitute an attempt by governments to appropriate teacher professionalism for political ends by prescribing and controlling the knowledge base of the teaching profession (Beck, 2009), while at the micro level, there have also been reported negative impacts on school climate, teacher stress (Embse, Pendergast, Segool, Saeki, & Ryan, 2016) and teacher turnover (Ryan et al., 2017). Department of Education (2011) looks at teacher competency frameworks from a managerial perspective, arguing that they strengthen the capacity of authorities to effectively assess and improve teachers' performance.

## **CONCLUSION**

To successfully facilitate development of competencies desirable of their learners, teachers ought to equally develop a wide range of overlapping competencies to enable them navigate the complexity of teaching. The professional standards clearly provide the public with the information on what teachers must know and be able to do during teaching since as per the adage "you can only give what you have". The standards therefore provide a tool to the public to focus on accountability, performance and compliance of teachers.

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