KIX Africa 19 Hub Secretariat at the UNESCO Institute for Capacity Building in Africa (IICBA)

Terms of Reference for Organizing Capacity Strengthening in Competency-Based Curriculum in Africa as part of a Community of Practice in the Foundations of Educational Quality

Summary of work: Facilitating virtual capacity-strengthening workshops to guide education policymakers in regional good practices in implementing competency-based curriculum, including curriculum review, reform, and teacher education, as applicable to their contexts, and as part of UNESCO IICBA’s community of practice in the Foundations of Educational Quality: Strengthening Our Teaching, Learning, and Assessment Practices and Systems.

Organizers: UNESCO International Institute for Capacity Building in Africa (IICBA), in coordination with UNICEF Eastern and Southern Africa Regional Office (ESARO) and the African Union (AU)

Facilitator: The African Curriculum Association

Type of contract: UNESCO Implementation Partnership Agreement

Duration: 6 weeks (June 17 – July 29, 2021)

Capacity strengthening seminar dates: July 1, 8, 15, and 22, 2021

Outputs: 1.) Four capacity-strengthening seminars; 2.) a virtual community of practice workspace and network with continued access to technical experts/facilitators and participants; 3.) digital copies of relevant research, evidence, tools, and guidelines (in accessible English) for participants.
Context and rationale:

In an increasingly globalized world, knowledge and skills can be the drivers of economic and social wellbeing. Many Sub-Saharan African nations have made significant achievements in increasing access to education for many of their children and youth; however, quality of education has lagged far behind. Manifold complex and intersecting factors like inadequate teacher preparation and education; low support and regard for teachers and the teaching profession; outdated curriculum; and weak assessment practices and systems contribute to a learning outcome crisis in many countries of the region, especially in economically and socially disadvantaged communities and for girls. According to UNESCO statistics, 88% of children are not achieving minimum proficiency levels in reading and mathematics by the end of primary and lower secondary school.\(^1\) To address this learning outcome crisis, there has been a shift in emphasis at the global, regional, and national levels from general access to education to the quality of teaching and learning outcomes, as well as more inclusive access to education. This vision of quality, inclusive, equitable education is anchored in several frameworks and vision statements, including SDG 4 – Education 2030 Framework for Action and the Continental Education Strategy for Africa (CESA) 2016–2025, as well as regional and national frameworks.

The learning outcome crisis cannot be overcome unless policies, programs, and practices are developed to support teachers and improve learning among all learners. Improving teaching and learning effectiveness and establishing a robust learning assessment system were urgent needs before the COVID-19 era, but have become more pressing during the pandemic which has affected approximately 297 million learners in Africa alone.\(^2\) For many learners, learning outcomes have been compromised and the learning process has changed dramatically. Learner-centered pedagogical practices, curriculum, and continuous formative assessments are needed to close the gap, especially for vulnerable learners.

In the regional Global Partnership for Education’s Knowledge and Innovation Exchange (KIX) Hub, the ministries of education in 18 Sub-Saharan African countries have identified teaching, learning, and learning assessment as their top priority and challenge for development.\(^3\) Poor instructional leadership and teachers support, poor quality of educational materials, low student motivation,

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and low teacher competence were cited as the most vexing realities in their contexts. Teachers need greater support and continuous professional development to teach and adapt the curriculum, and they should be included in reviews curricula and materials and reform efforts. Teachers also need education and professional development on learner-centric assessment practices, including formative and authentic assessment techniques.

Recently, competency-based curriculum has been gaining popularity in Africa as a way to shift paradigmatically from teacher-centered and knowledge-centric approaches to learner-centered and learning outcome-centric approaches. In a recent needs assessment, half of the GPEKIX Africa 19 member states requested ministerial capacity strengthening in competency-based curriculum design and case studies on learner-centered pedagogy in the region to increase student motivation and learning outcomes; and more than half requested capacity strengthening in formative and summative evaluation of learning.

As a response to their expressed need and interest, a community of practice in the Foundations of Educational Quality has been established by the KIX Secretariat at UNESCO IICBA (in consultation with the AU and UNICES ESARO) to bring together the relevant policy actors within these ministries for dialogue, capacity strengthening, technical advisement, and sharing of knowledge and innovations about teaching, learning, and assessment.

**Objectives of the community of practice:**

The purpose of this community of practice in the Foundations of Educational Quality is to bring together regional experts, ministry officers, and policy actors in curriculum, teaching, assessment design, and education planning to share their expertise, experiences, challenges, and innovations in curriculum, teaching, learning, and learning assessment to enrich their understanding of the domain and to extract policy ideas from other ministries and from technical advisors.

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4 Ibid.
6 GPEKIX Africa 19 rapid assessment of member ministries’ institutional capacity building needs, October 2020, UNESCO IICBA.
Topic of the workshop series:

The community of practice will commence with a series of workshops in an area of interest identified by policy actors from the 18 member countries: Implementing competency-based curriculum: Realities, lessons, and opportunities. The workshops will be led by thematic and technical experts and will focus on the qualities and good practices of and evidence on regional education systems that support competency-based curriculum.

Objectives of the workshop:

The workshops on competency-based curriculum intend to achieve the following objectives:

1. Guide policy actors in identifying and understanding the environment and processes needed to implement competency-based education, curriculum, and teacher preparation;
2. Engage the community of practice in analyzing their own systems’ readiness and policy windows for the introduction/strengthening of curriculum reform and implementation of competency-based education;

Expectations of the facilitator:

The facilitator of the workshop is expected to provide guidance to policy actors who are collectively meeting to study competency-based education. The facilitator is expected to provide content, discussion questions, learning activities, resources, and tools for the participants, as well as (crucially) model the message by using active learning pedagogies and continuous formative and/or authentic assessment.

Modality and methodology:

This workshop is the first segment of a larger planned learning series occurring within a community of practice organized by UNESCO IICBA. Communities of practice are groups of learners gathered

7 Identified by country representatives in a rapid needs assessment on institutional capacity building conducted by UNESCO IICBA in October 2020.
by common interest in a research area, technical skill, or domain. The learners meet and collaborate regularly to share and analyze information, improve their capacity, and advance their knowledge of the domain. This community of practice will meet virtually at least six times and may continue in-person when feasible to do so. Active learning pedagogies and continuous formative assessment will be used to engage participants in the co-creation of knowledge throughout the session. The sessions will be held virtually and in accessible English.

**Structure of the community of practice:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Workshop number</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Facilitator and Presenters</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>July 1, 2021</td>
<td>Strategic planning, designing, and developing of competency-based education and curriculum review and reform</td>
<td>African Curriculum Association and GPEKIX country presenters from ministries of education</td>
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<td>2.</td>
<td>July 8, 2021</td>
<td>Teacher professional development for competency-based education</td>
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<td>3.</td>
<td>July 15, 2021</td>
<td>Competency-based assessment</td>
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<td>4.</td>
<td>July 22, 2021</td>
<td>Monitoring and evaluating competency-based learning</td>
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<td><strong>Realities of competency-based curriculum and education</strong></td>
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<td>5.</td>
<td>July 29, 2021</td>
<td>Qualities and practices of and evidence on education systems which develop 21st century skills</td>
<td>TALENT</td>
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<td>6.</td>
<td>August 5, 2021</td>
<td>Technical case studies on scaling of innovations in teaching and learning and project cycle management</td>
<td>Global grantees in the KIX Africa 19 Hub</td>
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Participants:

The invited participants will be ministry of education focal points and national policy actors who are responsible for curriculum, pedagogy, assessment, and education planning in the regional GPEKIX member states: Eritrea, Ethiopia, The Gambia, Ghana, Kenya, Lesotho, Liberia, Malawi, Mozambique, Nigeria, Rwanda, Sierra Leone, Somalia, South Sudan, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia, and Zimbabwe. In line with GPEKIX’s goal of gender mainstreaming in education, each ministry will be encouraged to ensure at least one participating member is a woman.

Role of the KIX Africa 19 Hub:

The Knowledge and Innovation Exchange (KIX) is a joint endeavor between the Global Partnership for Education (GPE) and the International Development Research Centre (IDRC). The KIX Africa 19 Hub aims to support GPE member countries to accelerate progress toward equitable, inclusive, and quality education under Sustainable Development Goal 4 and the African Union’s Continental Education Strategy for Africa (CESA) 2016-2025. Through this community of practice, the Hub aims to bring together relevant policymakers, researchers, and practitioners to deliberate on the value, challenge, and methods of raising learning outcomes in their countries. The KIX Hub Secretariat will invite relevant stakeholders to the community of practice, begin and close each seminar, and work closely with the facilitators to ensure the objectives are achieved.

Partnership:

In partnering with the African Curriculum Association, UNESCO’s Implementation Partnership Agreement (IPA) will be utilized. The IPA is defined as: A legally binding instrument used to formalize the relationships with the implementation partner that outlines both UNESCO’s and the implementation partner’s roles and responsibilities, mandatory reporting and assurance mechanisms, funds transfer modalities and conditions for collaboration. (Clause 2.7) Implementation Partners’ Agreements are open only to not-for-profit organizations, including but not limited to: non-governmental organization (NGOs), research institutes, universities, foundations, professional associations, governments, governmental entities and intergovernmental organizations. United Nations entities are also eligible. (Clause 3.2)

Main features of an Implementation Partnership Agreement:

1. The partner brings added value and contribution to the project/activity;
2. The partner shares in the risks and rewards of the project/activity implementation and is responsible and accountable for delivering expected results;
3. The partner is involved at each step of the process, from detailed work plan elaboration to project/activity evaluation;
4. The partnership will include aspects beyond the delivery of a service to include capacity-building elements with respect to the partner and/or the beneficiary.