

AGA KHAN UNIVERSITY INSTITUTE FOR EDUCATIONAL DEVELOPMENT, EAST AFRICA: TRANSFORMING EAST AFRICA'S EDUCATION SECTOR

Equipping Teachers to Transform Teaching and Learning across East Africa

Teacher Development for Active Learning in Classrooms in East Africa

The Aga Khan University – Institute for Educational Development, East Africa (AKU - IED, EA) has been at the forefront, influencing policy and practice in the region since its establishment in 2007. Its vision is a continuous partnership with governments and other agencies to improve education quality through teaching, research, scholarship and policy dialogue in Eastern Africa and where AKDN operates. “We work very closely with the Ministry of Education and the relevant agencies in Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania because that enables us to support teachers in professional development and capacity building”, says Dr Nicholas Wachira, Head of Programmes at AKU-IED, EA.

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The Competency Based Curriculum (CBC) has been adopted in education in Kenya, Uganda, and Tanzania to make education learner-centred and focused on developing skills and capabilities, values and attitudes as opposed to learning being teacher-centred and bookish. By introducing this curriculum, the ministries of education recognise the importance of enhancing learner competencies and elevating educational outcomes. For this reason, teachers have to upgrade their classroom skills to build student knowledge, skills and attitudes effectively. This shift has been challenging for teachers. The government continues to equip teachers, and AKU-IED, EA as an education think tank supports teachers across the region in making this critical transition.

“The University has run teacher professional development programmes over the last 15 years. We collaborate with national governments, both public and private schools across East Africa, as well as development partners, to develop needs-based programmes that have a positive impact on the participant, their work and communities,” shares Dr Mweru Mwingi, Coordinator, at the Centre for Education and Lifelong Learning (CELL) at AKU-IED, EA.

CELL is dedicated to delivering outreach programmes across the region to meet the training needs of professionals working in the education sector. Trainings are preceded by a needs assessment for contextual relevance and to address real issues at the grassroots.

CELL offers workshops and short courses which are designed and developed by AKU-IED, EA faculty and

taught by faculty and Professional Development Tutors (PDTs) who are AKU alumni and holders of a Master in Education degree.

“We regularly offer refresher training for PDTs to keep them current with the educational trends. They are specialized in various disciplines such as: Educational Leadership and Management; Early Childhood Education; Science Education; Mathematics Education; Assessment Measurement and Evaluation, gender equity and inclusion, among others. We aim to have a variety of skilled trainers. They are employed as teachers, college tutors, Quality Assurance Officers, District Education Officers, Headteachers and Deputy headteachers,” explains Dr Nicholas Wachira.

The PDT training improves the quality of delivery of our programmes. “We continue to equip our PDTs because they train teachers and leaders to be knowledgeable, but more importantly, critical thinkers and innovative educators who are solution driven and responsive to needs as they emerge in their schools. The PDTs therefore need to be lifelong learners!” explains Dr Mwingi.

The Institute has implemented project interventions to strengthen the education systems and create sustainability measures in education. Currently, AKU-IED, EA is implementing the Foundations for Learning (F4L) project whose main aim is to equip learners, teachers, school administrators, college tutors, families of the respective school students, school communities, Civil Society Organizations (CSOs), and government leaders from the Ministry of Education and Teachers Service Commission with the knowledge, skills, attitudes, and values to lead more gender-responsive and inclusive education systems that advance equitable, quality learning outcomes for all while improving the quality of education. The project has



AKU-IED, EA Learning Conference January 2023: AKU Leadership, Ministries of Education (Tanzania, Kenya, Uganda), and Canadian High Commission Guest of Honor. Learning Conference held in January this year with the theme Building Resilient Education Systems Beyond Crises.

TRANSFORMING TEACHING AND LEARNING THE TRAJECTORY OF PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMMES OFFERED BY AKU-IED, EA

- **3,468** – Total number of pre-primary school teachers, primary school teachers, head teachers, and education officers trained in Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania (2012-2017)
- **823** – Total number of secondary school head teachers trained in leadership and management in the 21st Century in Uganda (2014)
- **282** – Total number of primary school teachers, head teachers and education officers trained in early years education, special needs education and pedagogical leadership in Tanzania (2016-2017)

over 1,088 beneficiaries; college tutors, student teachers, head teachers and Master of Education students on scholarships from Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania. Through the project, the Institute is helping to respond to challenges and seize opportunities emerging from implementing the CBC. “We are trying to build the capacity of teachers so that they can understand CBC and implement it in their context even where the resources are constrained. We want them to be able to interpret the new curriculum and adopt the relevant teaching and assessment practices,” explains Dr Winston Massam, a faculty member at AKU-IED, EA.

According to Dr Wachira, the Institute focuses on raising the quality of educational practice. “We have trained teachers in schools in Lindi and Mtwara in Tanzania, Kilifi, Kwale and Mombasa in Kenya and West Nile region in Uganda. We view these areas as marginalized with low educational attainments

compared to other regions in the country. Hence, we aim to build the capacity of teachers and educational leaders in providing quality education for learners.”

Continuous professional development is the cornerstone of teacher skills advancement and career progression. “Initially, governments would take teachers from the school for in-service training, which was very expensive. We now have school-based professional development training, which makes it affordable and more effective,” explains Dr Fredrick Mtenzi, Head of Research at AKU-IED, EA.

The Institute promotes the adoption of technology to enhance teaching and learning outcomes, especially in large classroom settings which is the norm in most public schools. AKU-IED, EA also collaborates with other partners in the implementation of the AKU- EdTech Hub project, which seeks to find specific, practical solutions to education challenges. One of the latest studies by AKU- EdTech Hub and Tanzania Institute of Education (TIE) conducted in Tanzania indicates a mindset change as teachers have realized that they need to develop their technological skills to keep up with the ICT-integrated learning trend in education.

TRAINING TEACHER EDUCATORS

AKU-IED, EA is renowned as a leading institution in the region for its focus on training teacher educators. Recognizing the importance of specialised expertise in teaching, the University is committed to developing highly skilled professionals who can effectively train teachers. All of their programmes are designed to nurture teacher educators. “In Kenya, we have trained a number of County Education Officers and personnel at the Teachers Service Commission (TSC). In Uganda, commissioners have gone through our programmes,” says Dr Wachira.

The University maintains a “graduate tracer program” to track the progress of its alumni and ensure their offerings align with market demands. IED, EA has over 100 students with doctorates or are pursuing PhD programmes in universities worldwide, a testament to the quality of education provided.

As Dr Winston Massam discloses the Institute collaborates with its Master in Education graduates across East Africa, selecting those interested. Together they foster a strong community of life-long learners and gain personal and professional growth through their contributions. The PDT model is unique to AKU-IED, EA “It is a noble career trajectory after the award of a Master degree in education”. Currently, 50 PDTs are working on various project interventions in East Africa.

Self-assessment is important in AKU-IED, EA. “We value feedback from our Master of Education students on how our programmes align with the current education needs. Their performance at their workstations after graduating from AKU-IED, EA is a key indicator that we are transforming educators into critical thinkers and innovators in education,” explains Dr Mtenzi.

Continued collaboration with PDTs, government institutions and partners invariably provide unique learning opportunities. The University, therefore, hosts the Annual Research Institute, a learning and dialogue forum where feedback is received on educational matters to improve both research and practice at the University and beyond.

“At AKU-IED, EA, we recognize that the teacher is the lynchpin in the effective delivery of the curriculum. Hence, we aspire to provide quality programmes, be they workshops or courses. We always want our partners and stakeholders to have the trust that they are in the right direction when they learn with us,” says Prof Jane Rarieya, the Dean.