

National Teachers' Standards

Teachers are critical to the successful development of children and society. For Ghana to meet its education and development goals, teachers must be adequately skilled, prepared and motivated to provide quality education for all. To help with this, we need National Teachers' Standards (Standards) to enable teachers to measure themselves against global standards of excellence in teaching and take pride in their development and achievements. Currently, institution-based Standards do exist in Ghana but not as a national codified set.

Transforming Teacher Education and Learning (T-TEL), a four year Government of Ghana programme supported by UKAid, is working with the country's foremost teacher education institutions to develop and finalise Standards that will be adopted nationwide. Wider efforts include improving the curriculum for educating teachers and supporting the country's 38 Colleges of Education (CoEs) with technical expertise and support to produce individuals ready to deliver excellent teaching and learning in schools.

This policy brief outlines the expertise behind National Teachers' Standards in Ghana, how they will enhance education delivery in the country, and what has been achieved so far.

International Examples

Across the world, National Teachers' Standards describe and support the criteria for "a good teacher" amidst each country's diverse education and learning environments. They are used to accredit and certify teachers and can influence what kind of teacher can help to meet the future needs of the country through the education of its students.

Standards need support from key government and institutional stakeholders, as well as early teacher involvement to help shape teacher education courses, and how they are assessed.

There are 4 key lessons from international examples of National Teachers' Standards in the USA, Singapore, South Africa, Nigeria, Uganda and the UK to consider in the development of Ghana's own Standards:

- 1. The need to promote Pedagogical Content Knowledge** or secure subject knowledge combined with the ability to explain concepts in creative and clear ways, for example using representation, analogy, physical objects and stories

- 2. The need to promote Teaching Practice in schools** as the main mechanism through which teachers can demonstrate the attainment of the Standards
- 3. The need to establish Critical Attitudes and Principles** in Standards
- 4. The need to reduce complexity for clarity and achievability.**

What Teacher Standards already exist in Ghana?

Standards do exist in Ghana but not at a national level, and are different across education institutions. For example, the University of Cape Coast (UCC) and the University of Education, Winneba (UEW) work to their own standards and more specific competences that support their curriculum and teacher education programmes. These provide a basis for consolidation into a national set.

Institutions currently working together to develop a codified set of national Standards include the National Teaching Council, the National Accreditation Board, the National Council for Tertiary Education, the Ghana Education Service and its Curriculum Research and Development Division, the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment, Teacher Unions, University of Cape Coast, University of Winneba and the National Inspectorate Board. T-TEL is facilitating and supporting this process.

What National Standards will achieve

National Teachers' Standards will provide the core basis for all teachers in Ghana at the beginning of their career, creating a unifying understanding and expectation of what high standards of teaching and learning involve. They will set out the minimum levels of professional knowledge, practice, values and attitudes that student teachers at the end of their pre-service teacher education course must meet, to be licensed as qualified teachers by the National Teaching Council. They may also shape the way in which teachers reflect on their own practice and how teachers are appraised.

Standards must be embedded in the Ghanaian context and be realistic and achievable for the majority of teachers, while also identifying their role in the country's national development.

For Standards to do this effectively, they need to align with the national curriculum and assessment specifications on learning in primary and secondary schools. In this way, they support the development of a national professional framework for teacher education and development across Ghana.

Specifications

Standards describe what a teacher needs to be able to do, and are used to support the on-going development of teachers once in the classroom.

Mentors and tutors are already working to various sets of competences to support teaching practice but national Standards will provide a broader set of expectations for them and student teachers, as well as serve as an important reference point for all teachers. They must also be easily understood by parents, School Management Committee members, Parent Teacher Association members, Board members, and the wider community, and so must be written without ambiguity.

Though there will be a core set of Standards for all teachers, details can be differentiated in guidelines on the specialisms demanded at primary and secondary school, such as requirements for content knowledge levels. Specificities for Early Childhood Development/ kindergarten, primary, junior and senior secondary schools can be made at a later stage.

Resources to help develop a set of National Standards

Other resources that were consulted in developing the national set of Standards include the Handbook for Principal Teacher Aspirants by the Ghana Education Service (GES), the Manual for Student Teachers on School Attachment, and the Handbook on Mentorship and the Student Teacher Competence Matrix.

In parallel, T-TEL is developing its own set of materials for mentors to use when working with student teachers in schools. These will be accessible on T-TEL's Learning Hub on its website in the first half of 2016.



STANDARDS CAN SUPPORT OTHER PROGRESS IN TEACHER EDUCATION

High-level discussions amongst key Ghanaian universities and T-TEL have contributed to the initial drafting by experts of a codified set of Standards that will work for all education institutions. There is ongoing discussion that the new Standards could form the basis for re-designing the pre-service teacher education curriculum as well as constitute the basis for the National Accreditation Board's accreditation process.

These would represent significant advancements for the teacher education sector. Leaders across education and in government are being encouraged to engage with and support these efforts, to ensure change takes place at all levels and is supported by all stakeholders of teaching and learning in Ghana. In this way, the country's education leaders will not only improve the quality of teaching and learning in Ghana, but also inspire and uplift our children to build a brighter future for themselves and for our nation.



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