



# CONSIDERATIONS FOR A PROFESSIONAL TEACHERS' COMPETENCIES FRAMEWORK FOR UGANDA

**A citizen Panels technical report**



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## Introduction

In 2013, a survey conducted by the World Bank found that 4 out of 5 primary school teachers in Uganda did not have the minimum knowledge in English, math, and pedagogy, which showed a significant challenge within the education system<sup>1</sup>. Uganda has a full appreciation of the key role of teachers as a major backbone of any education system and skilled teachers are crucial in unleashing the potential of their learners, leading to better learning outcomes. Upon this background, the education sector in Uganda is undergoing various reforms to improve the quality of teaching and learning.

The Uganda Ministry of Education, in collaboration with the British Council, is developing a competencies framework tailored for teachers in Uganda. This framework aims to guide the development of the “Teachers’ Qualification Framework”, a new policy that is being developed to guide, among other things the competencies a teacher in Uganda is expected to possess, which would inadvertently enhance the quality of education within the country. To accomplish this task, the Ministry of Education and Sports and the British Council in Uganda have convened a taskforce comprised of policymakers and education sector experts. The taskforce adopted two primary strategies: conducting a survey among professionals in the education sector and stakeholder engagements for input into the policy development process. As part of this endeavor, a member of the task force reached out to ACRES, seeking information on the competencies of professional teachers from various countries. This data is intended to complement the insights gathered from stakeholders within Uganda's education sector. Ultimately, this information will play a crucial role in informing the review process of the Uganda Teacher’s Policy.

The evidence summarised sought to respond to the following question: *What specific competencies should the Ministry of Education consider in developing Uganda's teacher competencies framework to enhance teaching quality and improve learning outcomes?*<sup>2</sup>

The evidence was summarised in a rapid response brief<sup>2</sup> and presented to the member of the task force committee. Following a discussion about the evidence findings, we realized that there is urgent need to involve teachers and solicit their input, informed by evidence, into the policymaking process since they are the key stakeholders who will be affected by the Teachers

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.globalpartnership.org/results/stories-of-change/uganda-building-stronger-teaching-force#:~:text=In%202013%2C%20a%20survey%20conducted,range%20of%2030%20to%2040%25>.

<sup>2</sup> <https://acres.or.ug/eg/wp-content/uploads/2024/04/teacher-competencies-framework.pdf>

Qualifications Framework. We therefore organized two citizen panels to seek the teachers' inputs, and help to further contextualize the evidence presented in the Rapid Response Brief.

## **Aim**

### **Overall objective**

To incorporate citizen (teachers') voices into the evidence on the Teachers Competencies Framework that is to feed into the Teachers Qualifications Framework policy in Uganda.

### **Specific objectives**

1. To explore teachers' evidence informed views, opinions and understanding of competences including knowledge, skills, attitudes and values, a teacher is required to have in order to effectively facilitate teaching and learning.
2. To explore strategies of how teachers can be supported to acquire, enhance and maintain competences.

## **The Process**

### **Invitation of participants**

We invited teachers from schools in the Kampala Metropolitan Area and other nearby districts to participate in the panels. The decision to invite teachers within the stated area was reached because the panel discussion was meant to last for half a day and was non-residential. In addition, we expected the teachers to arrive at the venue in time (08:00 hrs.) and end by (13:00 hrs). This would only allow us to engage with the teachers who could make it to the venue within an hour of travel considering off peak traffic time.

Participants from primary and secondary schools were equally represented while ensuring fair gender balance. We purposively identified the schools from which we were to invite teachers from, ensuring a delicate balance between government aided, and private schools, and schools from the urban, peri-urban and rural areas. To invite teachers, we collaborated with the headteachers of the school or their designates, discussing the purpose of the panel, what we would expect the invited teachers to do, and how many hours we expected the invited teachers to be off station. We then asked the heads of the schools to suggest names of the teachers who they believed could actively participate and make meaningful contributions to the topic.

Following suggestions from school heads, we contacted each recommended teacher in-person for those we found on the school premises, and via phone calls for those who weren't at school at the time, outlining the purpose of the panel, expectations, and duration. We followed this with official letters of invitation via email, elaborating on the discussion's objectives and what is expected of the participants.

For the teachers who indicated unavailability on the set dates, we requested them to recommend interested and capable colleagues or extend the invitation to fellow teachers through platforms like WhatsApp groups. To ensure participation, we made follow up phone calls to all invited teachers a day to the panels.

### **Citizen Briefs**

We developed two citizen briefs that we used in the panels. One was about “*Considerations for a Professional Teachers’ Competencies Framework for Uganda*” and the other on “*Strategies on how teachers can be supported to acquire, enhance, and maintain the competences*”. These showed the key messages and summarized the evidence findings into atmost two pages for participants to easily read and understand the discussion's background, further enhancing active participation.

### **The Citizen panels**

We held two, two-half day citizen panels. The two citizen panels were deliberate as we divided the primary school teachers and the secondary school teachers. The expectations of these cadres are different, but also, to have sufficient engagements during the discussions, we needed to have two groups. The first of the two-half day panels for each of the groups focused on allowing the teachers to interact with the evidence, while the second solicited for evidence-informed discussions into the topic.

### **Venue**

The panel discussions were held at Esella Country Hotel, Kira, Wakiso district. The venue was selected because it is a modest facility situated in a quiet environment where people can feel comfortable sitting and having a discussion without interruptions. The hotel is also on the outskirts of Kampala, which allows for protected time for the delegates and to avoid any interruptions that can come up from being within Kampala.

### **Description of the participants**

Thirty (30) teachers were invited, 15 from primary and 15 from secondary schools, from both private and public learning institutions. Only twenty eight teachers (28) attended the panel discussions. Among these, 53.57%(15/28) were male and 46.43% (13/28) were female. Most teachers were from schools in the central region (27/28), while one teacher was from the eastern region. The districts from which the participants came included: Wakiso, Kampala, Luwero, and Jinja.

## Facilitation

The panel discussions were facilitated by ACRES staff, i.e. Mr. Edward Kayongo, Ms. Caroline Nakalema, and Mr. Abubakar Ssettumba. At the beginning of the panel discussions, the facilitator, Mr. Kayongo, read the Chatham's house rules to the participants. He indicated to them no record would be attributable to an individual teacher. The proceedings were audio-recorded after seeking consent of the participants. The transcripts and typed summaries of the proceedings captured by the other facilitators were analyzed following the framework analysis. Prior to the discussion, Mr. Edward Kayongo welcomed all the participants with a warm greeting.

In his introductory remarks, he stated that ACRES is a research institution that delivers timely evidence for policy making. He also highlighted ACRES' collaboration with the different institutions, including the Education Service Commission. He further informed the participants that the panel discussion would gather more information on the Teachers' competence framework, which might be considered further for policy decisions. More importantly, the facilitator requested participants to read the citizen briefs presented to them during the first 30 minutes to enhance active participation during the discussion

## Summary of findings

The panels deliberated on various key aspects, including:

- a) Teachers' opinions, views, and understanding of the definition of competences.
- b) The importance of competences to the teaching profession.
- c) Relevance of the competences presented from the evidence findings.
- d) Exploring whether competences can be taught or transferred.
- e) Strategies on how teachers can be supported to acquire, enhance, and maintain the competences.

## Opinions, views and understanding of the definition of competences.

We defined competence as the ability to integrate necessary knowledge, skills, attitudes, and values effectively to manage complex problems in a specific teaching context. There was general understanding of the definition of competences among the participants. However, major clarifications were sought on some terms used in the definition such as "complex" and "effectively." Additionally, participants argued that the outcome of a teacher having and applying the competences should be included to enrich the definition. For example,

One teacher noted the following.

*"Why 'complex problems' in the definition? It should just be 'problems,' as 'complex' differs according to the person."*

Another teacher argued that;

*“Teachers are good at different fields and many times they need to have borrowed strategies to meet the learners' needs. Therefore, the competencies come in if you are able to navigate complex problems.”*

Participants further stressed the importance of continuous learning for teachers to be well-equipped with the necessary knowledge, skills, attitudes, and values. This can involve approaches to staying updated with new information, teaching techniques, being open to innovation and change, collaboration with others, and respect for oneself, among others.

### **The importance of competences to the teaching profession.**

The panel considered competencies important for facilitating teaching and learning. The competences provide direction and guidance to ensure effective teaching and learning and therefore enhance learner outcomes and achievements. Participants, on the other hand, highlighted that there is a missed opportunity in popularizing and increasing awareness of the required competences to the relevant stakeholders, including the teachers.

*“Competencies should be given the weight they deserve. They should be amplified and taught to the teachers, but concentration is on subject matter/content only and other aspects that help teachers deliver effectively are left out. Teachers need to know the correct way of doing things. Some teachers dont know and some of the things are not taught in teacher training colleges.” A teacher noted.*

Upon this, there were suggested strategies that might be considered to strengthen awareness of the teacher competences. These included:

1. Providing clear explanations of the competencies to enhance teachers' understanding and their ability to apply them effectively. This should include not only competences on the subject content but also other crucial skills essential for effective teaching.
2. Organizing workshops and refresher courses to ensure teachers remain equipped with the required competencies. These refresher courses could be conducted periodically, either on a termly or annual basis, recognizing the tendency for skills to diminish over time despite initial training.
3. Enhancing the supervision and implementation of competencies by bodies such as Uganda National Teachers' Union (UNATU) and the Directorate of Inspection of Schools.



4. Strengthening collaboration between teachers and classroom-centered tutors to facilitate the smooth operation of classroom activities.
5. Integrating the competencies into the curriculum and the National Teacher Policy to ensure their consistent implementation.

### **Relevance of the competences from the evidence findings**

The competences from the evidence findings presented included: structured knowledge frameworks; subject-specific knowledge; classroom management skills; interpersonal and collaborative skills; attitudes towards professional practice; and innovation; professional development, and adaptive expertise.

One participant opened up the discussion by stressing that “ *It is not possible for a teacher to know everything*”. Recognizing that some of the things taught may be out of the teachers’ context and that even learners may be more knowledgeable than the teachers, participants emphasized that a teacher should be able to bring in a diversity of experiences and contexts, especially through research to manage the learning and maximize learners’ outcomes.

Among the 14 competences categories presented, those considered as very crucial by the participants included learner development, content knowledge, pedagogical content , planning instruction, application of content, as well as assessment and evaluation. Participants further noted that the competence of knowing differences among learners was central to all the competences a teacher should have.

Learning differences looked at the ability of a teacher to understand and support diversity, lead strategies to prevent exclusion, provide equal opportunities for all students, create an environment that enhances inclusion, and provide an accommodation plan to meet the needs of special learners. Under this, participants were concerned about:

- The negative impact of redistributing learners in main centres and annexes during examination periods, as this demoralises children and makes them less confident. Additionally, streaming classes for fast learners and slow learners undermines the benefits of peer to peer learning.
- The negative Influence of politicians on the performance of schools while praising the best performers and downgrading the worst performers.

- The negative influence of leadership and management of schools in the selection criteria of learners. Participants stated that some schools select only the best performers, and other learners are left out.

Under Knowledge of legislation competence where a teacher should follow laws and regulations impacting the field of education, take into consideration ethical values, and follow policies set out by the school, the state, or the country of practice, participants noted that there is need for teachers to have boundaries, as some teachers end up engaging in other activities such as politics and personal businesses instead of teaching. More concerns were raised about cases of defilement, examination mal-practices and bribes received by teachers to cheat exams.

Other discussions on competencies included:

1. Ensuring proficiency in content knowledge. Participants stressed that it is imperative for teachers to thoroughly understand the subject matter they're teaching and plan their lessons in alignment with the curriculum.
2. Prioritizing research, and in particular action research as an essential tool for teachers to facilitate teaching and learning effectively. Action research involves observing a challenge, getting a solution and observing any changes.
3. Fostering an environment conducive to self-discovery for learners. This can be achieved through engaging learners actively, for instance, through learner-centered lessons, group work, empowering them to take charge of their learning.
4. Revision of the examination assessment criteria for learners. Consider conducting continuous assessment and recognize other abilities for learners by assessing skills such as psycho-motor skills in other activities such as games and sports; social skills; and life skills.
5. Appreciating and recognizing the performance of learners to encourage co-creation and learning between the learner and the teacher.
6. Equipping teachers with the knowledge and skills to cater for both fast learners and slow learners within the class. This could be achieved through utilizing methods like integrating slow learners with fast learners and establishing remedial lessons or exams for slow learners.
7. Teachers should receive basic training to assist children with learning difficulties, while utilizing methods like child study and counseling when needed.
8. Strengthening collaboration among stakeholders such as religious leaders to guide both learners and teachers and the community at large.

9. Strengthening the monitoring, supervision and inspection mechanisms at school, subnational and national levels.
10. Training teachers specialized in supporting children with disabilities and increasing their numbers to better support these learners.
11. There is need for government to subsidize special needs schools to be able to maintain teachers for learners with disabilities within these institutions.
12. Strengthen awareness of penalties to reduce some of the mal-practices especially during exams.
13. Parental involvement in setting resolutions
14. Learner involvement in setting the laws and regulations in schools.

Additionally, the panel pointed out the importance of the competence of attitudes and values, emphasizing that without motivation, teachers cannot effectively produce results. As a result, many good teachers opt for other means of employment or businesses for survival. Some of the causes of negative attitudes, the panel highlighted included:

- Many teachers lack financial resources for further studies irrespective of the zeal to upgrade.
- Inequities in policy implementation within the country, for example some schools in the country are allowed to collect additional funds from parents to complete different school related activities, while others are barred from doing the same.
- Gaps in recruitment procedures of head teachers and teachers, as some are not recruited on merit or capability
- Some teachers join teaching as the last resort.
- Negative attitudes by headteachers, which subsequently influence the attitudes of the teaching staff.

To enhance teacher motivation and improve attitudes, various strategies can be implemented, as pointed out by the participants:

1. Recognition and Appreciation

- Promote teachers, especially those who are deserving.
- Ensure salary increments and timely payment of salaries for teachers.

*“It is clear that teachers in private schools are doing better than those in public schools because they are well-paid. To get positive attitude, you have to be motivated”.* One teacher stated.

- Recognize and appreciate good performing teachers through awards and recognition ceremonies.
2. Supportive Environment
- Provide adequate instructional materials to teachers. One participant stated that sometimes teachers have to spend their own money to purchase some instructional materials that may not be in place.
  - Strengthen supervision and follow-up mechanisms at the school level. This can be through establishing of methods of accountability for teaching and learning among teachers.
  - Provide accommodation for teachers, especially those transferred to remote areas.
  - Establish mentorship programs for continuous learning and development.
3. Empowerment and Engagement
- Empower Parent-Teacher Associations (PTAs) to strengthen their role of overseeing the school activities and management.
  - Improve leadership and management relationships between head teachers and teachers to enhance smooth school management.
  - Engage relevant stakeholders to develop friendly policies. Participants argued that teachers are often not consulted during policy formulation processes.
  - Encourage community sensitization while leveraging religious leaders and community talks to enhance parental involvement in their children's education.
4. Policy and Structural Improvements
- Develop systematic ways of promoting deserving teachers.
  - Embed competences within teaching institutions.
  - Strengthen on-ground monitoring and supervision structures.
  - Establish minimum wage and appropriate salary scales for all teachers, both in private and public schools in the country.
  - Recognize and substantiate the teaching profession. Teachers highlighted that the teaching profession is, on several occasions, not recognized by society as a good profession, which demoralizes them.
  - Sensitize teachers on the different policies and streamline different policies to work in harmony.
  - Activate teacher Saccos to support teachers financially to improve their welfare.

### Discussion on whether competences can be taught or transferred.

Participants believed that most of the competences can be taught. However, there were controversies about whether competences such as attitudes and values can be taught or transferred. Some teachers believe that attitudes and values cannot be transferred as these are dependent on someone's background, experiences, culture, or religion. On the other hand, some teachers believe that attitudes and values can be taught. For example, Buganda women are taught to kneel from childhood, and this can be instilled through demonstration. Most importantly, attitudes are greatly influenced by underlying values.

- In the process of cultivating attitudes and values, it's essential to recognize that these may take a longer time to be instilled and require consistence in teaching. While attitudes may evolve over time or in response to various environments, teachers should maintain a willingness to learn and consistently emphasize positive values and consequently transfer them to learners.
- Teachers believe that core values should begin from the individual, which can then be transferred. In this, a teacher may set their own values. More importantly, learners often mirror the values and attitudes of their teachers, particularly when they are positive.
- Some teachers don't even know what values they should possess. One participant noted that values such as love and empathy should be possessed and assessed even before a teacher enters the profession. The panel mentioned some other values and attitudes a teacher should possess, which include: Dignity, Excellence, Integrity, Good stewardship, Honesty, Positivity, Professionalism, Accountability, Fairness, Ownership, and Teamwork.

While assessing attitudes can be challenging, it's essential to evaluate them longitudinally rather than relying on one-time assessments. Evaluating attitudes and values against national standards is crucial as teachers often emulate national norms. The Panel highlighted various ways of how attitudes and values can be assessed;

- Observation: Assess how the teacher interacts with students, administrators, and parents in various situations.
- Feedback from stakeholders: Gather input from colleagues and other stakeholders about the teacher's behavior and attitudes.
- Individual interaction among teachers: Observe how teachers interact with each other on a personal level.

- Simulation testing or Scenario creation: Create scenarios to assess values and responses to challenging situations.
- Monitoring: Regularly monitor the teacher's behavior and attitudes over time.
- Alignment with mission, vision, and purposes: Evaluate how the teacher's actions align with the school's goals and values.
- Collaboration with school counselors: Work with counselors to evaluate and address any concerns regarding attitudes and values.
- Foster open and casual relationships with teachers to encourage them to express themselves openly

### **Strategies on how teachers can be supported to acquire, enhance, and maintain the competences.**

Participants stressed that it is important to acknowledge other contributing factors that influence the performance of both the teacher and the learner, such as the environment, physical and emotional challenges. From this, teachers explored various strategies of how they can be supported including:

#### **Parents, community members, and other stakeholders**

- Strengthening Parents and Teachers Associations (PTAs) to take the lead in monitoring and supervising schools. For example, schedules should be established for parents to foster accountability, supervise ongoing activities at school, and oversee the standards and management of schools. However, there should be streamlined processes encompassing their roles and limitations to enhance collaboration with staff.
- PTAs should allocate resources to uplift their staff using the PTA account. One strategy could involve integrating private teachers into public schools to enhance support for teachers.
- Allow school administrators and school management committees to be involved in the recruitment process, as these know the staffing needs of schools.
- School administrators and school management committees should establish mechanisms for recognizing, awarding, and incentivizing good-performing teachers.

#### **Teachers' unions**

- Strengthen the structures and functionalities of the existing teacher Unions. Participants argued for improvement in leadership and advocacy skills of teacher unions.

- Strengthen monitoring and supervision of teacher unions at the school level to ensure implementation, follow-ups, and evaluation.
- Strengthen and empower teacher unions to lobby for: loans for teacher well-being, scholarships and short courses for professional development; re-establishment of cost-free pre-service centers; strengthen collaboration with NGOs and educational institutions to enhance guidance and pre-service training; push for salary equity for both public and private schools; and establish peer-learning networks for knowledge exchange and growth among teachers.
- Consider re-assessing the salaries for teachers for learners with special needs, as they put in extra work to teach and end up being paid the same salary as other teachers in schools without learners with disabilities.
- Harmonize the qualifications required for upgrading at the university level, as some teachers believe that even a Grade 3 teacher can apply for University. Some teachers believe that Grade 5 is invalid for upgrading at the university level and a demotivation.
- Advocate for salary increments for teachers who upgrade. While diploma-holding teachers may seek further education, degree holders may feel disincentivized due to a perceived lack of financial reward, leading many to pursue alternative career paths.
- Advocate for decentralization of teacher unions at lower levels such as parish or division levels to bring representation and advocacy to teachers.

#### **Subject-specific associations**

- Involve subject-specific associations in the recruitment of teachers to provide more guidance on the required competences.
- Strengthen subject-specific associations to develop their leadership, advocacy and networking skills through opportunities such as seminars and conferences.
- Encourage inter-subject competitions among schools and districts to enhance collaboration and facilitate learning opportunities for both learners and teachers
- Identify and embed relevant content and teaching practices, such as digital literacy.

#### **Ministries, Departments and Agencies**

- Strengthen monitoring and supervision of the curriculum implementation processes by utilizing platforms such as the teacher information management system.

- Strengthen partnerships with stakeholders to develop policies based on recommendations from on-ground stakeholders, including teacher unions, parents, and the community.
- Strengthen collaboration between government teacher recruitment bodies and schools to create a smooth transition from university education to internship programs in schools.
- Establish in-service teacher training programs, especially during holidays, as teachers have the time during that period.
- Review and update ethics for teacher recruitment.
- Provide support to early career teachers in terms of gaining experience.
- Incentivize teachers who teach in remote areas or hard-to-reach areas.
- Implement strategies such as training to increase the number of qualified teachers.

### **Colleges and Universities**

- Develop teacher education programs aimed at facilitating professional advancement, tailored to meet the needs of educators at various qualification levels.
- Revise and extend the internship period for school practice teachers while ensuring adequate supervision and support from the schools for at least one school term. One approach could be establishing mentorship programs within schools to support school practice teachers.
- Enable teachers to access online databases and education materials to enhance their professional development.
- Provide research opportunities to teachers to enhance their research skills.
- Revise the curriculum to incorporate more practical aspects, ensuring its relevance to real-world teaching scenarios.
- Universities should establish demonstration schools to provide practical training and enhance the skills of teachers.

### **Local School boards and Local districts**

- Strengthen school inspections by trained inspectors to ensure compliance and quality standards.
- School boards should be strengthened to offer recommendations to the ministry regarding effective school management practices.
- Local school boards should facilitate and finance teachers' retooling through Continuing Professional Development (CPD) programs.



- Provide support to schools during the recruitment process to ensure qualified staff are hired.
- Provide support to schools in implementing effective strategies for managing unqualified teachers who may be recruited. For example, schools may use school attachment programs, where newly graduated teachers are paired with experienced educators to observe and learn effective classroom management techniques.

## Conclusion

Through a multifaceted approach involving teachers, learners, parents, the community, teacher unions, subject-specific associations, ministries, departments, agencies, colleges, universities, and local school boards/ school management committees and other stakeholders in the education sector, teachers can strive to attain the required competences. More importantly teachers emphasized that strategies aimed at enhancing teacher competences should not only concentrate on developing knowledge and skills but should also prioritize cultivating positive attitudes and values.