

POLICY BRIEF

TEACHER EDUCATION POLICY

Kenya Knows What Trains Teachers Well. It Hasn't Made It Policy.

To: Cabinet Secretary for the Kenya Ministry of Education

Policy Focus: A national teacher mentorship and preparation policy for Competency-Based Education

DECISION REQUESTED: Direct the Ministry of Education and the Teachers Service Commission to approve and resource a single national pre-service and in-service teacher mentorship policy, and embed it in teacher performance review, training curricula, and university-school partnerships.



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National pre-service teacher mentorship policies currently in force

2

Countries whose mentorship models were assessed as directly transferable to Kenya

2 terms

Extra learning gained when coaching is sustained rather than one-off

1:10

Coach-to-school ratio the evidence supports, against Kenya's typical higher caseloads

The Policy Issue

Kenya's move to Competency-Based Education (CBE) has placed new demands on how teachers are trained, and teacher preparation has not kept pace with curriculum reform (Mauti, Moindi, & Masagara-2025). The national teacher education and teaching practice guidelines are governed by the Ministry of Education agencies, however, pre- and in-service teacher education remains characterized by a persistent theory-practice gap, while mentorship and supervised practicum experiences are inconsistently implemented and insufficiently institutionalized (Wambua, Waghid, & Theodorio-2026).

The result is a workforce that understands CBE's principles in theory but has not been equipped to deliver them in the classroom. Teachers report that despite repeated retraining, they still feel unprepared, and describe being “managed” by more senior colleagues rather than mentored by them. This is not a shortage of goodwill or knowledge among teachers; it is the absence of a system that turns training into supported practice.



As we continue with the roll-out of Competency Based Education, we will still require evidence to inform critical decisions for policy and even financial intervention. Indeed, the challenges our education system faces can only be addressed effectively through research and evidence that propose and test viable solutions.”

Hon. Julius Migos Ogamba, Cabinet Secretary for Education, Kenya

What The Evidence Says

- **Structured mentorship is proven and transferable.** South Africa's national teacher mentorship model in which mentors observe lessons, co-plan, and hold reflective conversations with trainees, backed by close coordination between universities and schools offers a framework Kenya can adapt directly. Singapore links progressive, mentored classroom placements to career-long mentoring, and is regarded as one of the most systematic teacher-development systems worldwide

- **Concrete instructional tools work.** Kenya's own Tusome literacy programme showed that giving teachers scripted lesson plans and clear instructional steps produced measurable literacy gains. However, removing the structured materials while keeping the same training and coaching did not sustain the improvement (Piper et al., 2018).
- **Sustained coaching outperforms one-off training.** Across 66 rigorous evaluations in sub-Saharan Africa, training paired with long-term coaching was consistently more effective than training alone. In South Africa, adding in-classroom coaching almost doubled the reading gains produced by centralised training alone (Conn, 2017).
- **Coaching only works if caseloads are realistic.** In Kenya's own Teachers' Advisory Centre (TAC) tutoring system, literacy outcomes were higher when one coach supported 10 schools rather than 15 schools. This is direct evidence for how a national mentorship policy should be staffed (Piper & Zuilkowski, 2015).
- **Career incentives make training stick.** Across 33 evaluations in 14 low- and middle-income countries, teacher training linked to career advancement, such as, promotion or salary progression, produced approximately two extra terms of learning more than training with no such link. This is the evidence base for tying mentorship to how Kenya reviews teacher performance, rather than leaving it an unrewarded extra duty (Popova et al., 2022).
- **Abstract, top-down training fails.** A large national training programme evaluated in China shows that theoretical training delivered at scale, without follow-up or concrete tools, may not change practice at all (Loyalka et al. 2019). Similarly, regional and local evidence corroborate this position pointing to the centrality of follow up supported by direct feedback to implementers.

Evidence confidence: The Kenya-specific evidence is largely qualitative, including the teacher and mentor accounts gathered from the 2025 EE4A conference dialogues. Compounded by the effect sizes from rigorous evaluations elsewhere in Africa and from Kenya's own Tusome and coaching programmes, they justify a resourced national policy built around coaching and mentorship, not another round of one-off training.

Policy Recommendations

Approve and resource a single national pre-service and in-service teacher mentorship policy, modelled on structured approaches such as South Africa's and Singapore's. The policy should:

- Define mentor roles, responsibilities, and caseloads informed by the evidence that lower ratio of coach to schools is more effective.
- Be included in the Teachers Service Commission's (TSC) teacher performance review system, so mentoring is recognised, certified, and rewarded rather than performed informally
- Replace ad hoc CBE in-service training with a standardised, teacher-co-designed national curriculum built on structured lesson plans, teacher guides, and ongoing coaching rather than one-off workshops
- Align university and Teacher Training College curricula with CBE requirements, benchmarked against other progressive contexts (e.g Singapore), mentored classroom placements and reflective digital portfolios
- Clearly map the supervisory role of middle-level education officers such as Curriculum Support Officers and equivalents, to ensure coaching support reaches classrooms consistently
- Formalise university-school-college partnerships through agreements covering standardised practicum placement, replacing the current random assignment, and joint supervision

The Ministry of Education leads policy approval and resourcing, the TSC as the independent body responsible for the teaching service leads mentor certification and its integration into performance review. Universities, Teacher Training Colleges, and the Education Deans Forum-Kenya lead curriculum alignment and placement agreements. The Kenya Institute of Curriculum Development (KICD) supports the redesign of training materials as an agency of the Ministry.

A Practical Route To Implementation

Time	Priority action	Lead and evidence
First 6 months	Ministry and TSC to jointly spearhead the development and approval of the mentorship policy and define mentor roles, caseloads, and certification requirements.	MoE & TSC. Output: approved policy and costed implementation plan.
Ongoing	Universities and teacher training colleges adopting the approved mentorship policy in their teaching practice. TSC develops and uses mentorship framework guided by the approved policy to support in-classroom teachers. Certify the first cohort of mentors; integrate mentoring into teacher performance review; pilot the mentorship policy in a subset of counties.	TSC, KICD, MoE and Counties Output: Mentorship policy adopted by key stakeholders, that is, TSC, KICD, universities and training colleges, public evaluation and scale decision.
Ongoing	Continuous monitoring, evaluation and learning of the mentorship policy uptake by key stakeholders	MoE Planning/M&E, EE4A research partners. Output: Sustained monitoring and improvement of mentorship policy implementation

Guardrails

- Avoid overloading implementers: caseloads should follow manageable coach to school ratios to achieve effective mentorship.
- Avoid a certificate-only reform: certifying mentors without follow-up coaching visits will not improve outcomes. It requires documented coaching contact, not mere attendance.
- Avoid parallel systems: mentorship duties should be built into existing performance review systems, not added as a separate and unpaid burden.

Conclusion

Kenya does not lack evidence on what makes teacher training work — concrete tools, sustained coaching, realistic caseloads, and mentorship tied to career progression. It lacks a codified national policy that makes those principles the default rather than the exception. Approving and resourcing that policy is the single highest-leverage action available before Kenya completes its transition to Competency-Based Education.

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