

Workshop to Develop Benchmarks for the Bachelor of Social Work in East Africa

**Organized By Inter-University Council Of East Africa (IUCEA),
Entebbe, Uganda, 20th To 22nd July 2023.**

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The Inter-University Council of East Africa, in conjunction with the International Association of Schools of Social Work and other stakeholders, undertook a process to develop benchmarks for the bachelor of social work

The Bachelor of Social Work Programme is designed to respond to global, regional, and national quests for the provision of quality social services by developing the capacities and competencies of professional social workers. The main aim of the benchmarks is to promote harmonization of the Bachelor of social work programmes across the region in order to enable comparability, transferability and inter-country mobility of students and professionals in line with the EAC integration policy.

What are Bench Marks?

- Bench marks are minimum standards describe the generic principles that guide the development & implementation of all SW programmes in any country
- Meant to achieve comparability of qualifications for Social Work students across Higher Education Institutions (HEIs)
- Benchmarks act as a guide and tool for the universities curriculum design and a tool for the National Regulatory Authorities to assess the quality of programmes;
- Set with consideration that SW units (within HEIs) can creatively go beyond the threshold standards
- Benchmark may be of interest to prospective students and employer, seeking information about the nature and standards of awards in a given subject or subject area. In the East African context, benchmarks are important because they promote harmonization of academic programmes in the specific field and consequently support student mobility and smoothen the regionalization of the labour market, which is one of the aims of the East African Community (EAC) Common Market Protocol.

Need for Bench Marks/minimum standards in Social Work Curriculum

Social workers are part of the national social service workforce if not the dominant professional. They occupy a center-stage in meeting the needs of vulnerable populations, including children, youth, people living poverty, internally displaced people, those affected by disease; persons with disability; the elderly; those whose rights are violated in families and communities. Ineffective service delivery is partly attributed to the limited access to quality training and education. Kenya and East Africa is not exceptional to this phenomenon.

In this 21st century the global pace has increased due to technological advances and globalization. It is therefore inevitable that the problems faced by the society continue to evolve and become more complex. Due to these social realities, dedicated and career-oriented social workers are needed to help societies to come up with solutions and interventions to these problems in a micro and macro view and context.

In this context, Social Work as a discipline needs to be developed taking into consideration the static and dynamic social realities so as to give graduates a very broad understanding about the social world in its dynamism and complexity.

So, the benchmarks for Social Work are to be developed not only as one of the set milestones for the development of an East African Quality Assurance System but also and above all for its importance as a discipline to handle current and specific social issues and focus on the future.

The objectives of the workshop among others are to:

- i. Reflect on the status of Social Studies curriculum in general and social work in particular in the region.
- ii. Discuss and agree on a framework for the benchmarks of Social Work Programme;
- iii. Identify key stakeholders and define their roles and map their expectations.
- iv. Design a Bachelor of Social Work and Social Administration programme Benchmarks for East Africa.

The Workshop discussions were guided by the following Questions?

- i. What is the current status of Social Work programmes in East Africa?
- ii. Which quality aspects can be identified from the design and delivery of Social Work programme in each of the Partner State?
- iii. How can the design and delivery of Social Work programme in East Africa be harmonized so as to ascertain the quality, comparability and mobility of the university students across the region?
- iv. How can university lecturers be empowered to cope with the challenges in delivery of Social Work programme in East African HLIs?
- v. How can the key stakeholders in Social Work programmes be involved in improving quality of social service delivery in East African HLIs?
- vi. What will be the areas of focus/specialization and the courses in Social Work programme?

Participants

The workshop involved experts from Higher Learning Institutions and organizations providing education and training in Social Work. Also participants were members of national association of social workers in EAC Partner States. Social work professionals and social work practitioners.

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| ● <i>Kenya</i> | <i>Tanzania</i> | <i>Uganda</i> |
| ● <i>Burundi</i> | <i>Somali</i> | <i>UNICEF</i> |
| ● <i>Rwanda</i> | | |

- *Association of Social Work Educators in Kenya (ASWEK), National Association of Social Workers in Uganda (NASWU)*

Take home from the workshop

1. The skill and knowledge acquired from the workshop will be applied to align TUKs Social Work curriculum with regional and global standards in Social Work Education as the Department of PHD prepares to roll out the BA SWCD programme in September 2023.
2. The aligned BA SWCD programme will promote harmonization of our programme with all other SW programmes within the East African Member States in order to enable comparability, transferability and inter-country mobility of students and professionals in line with the EAC integration policy.
3. Through participation in the workshop, TUK has gained the status of the focal University in Kenya and in EA in the Social Work Education area of expertise. This means that TUK is now positioned to gain a stronger capacity to seek collaboration with industry stakeholders, African and International Schools of social work for strategic partnership in the academia.

Recommendation;

The Technical University of Kenya should join the Inter-University Council for East Africa.

Refferences

- IUCEA (2014): Principles and guidelines for Quality assurance in East Africa. Kampala, Uganda.
- IUCEA (2016): Handbook for Quality Assurance in Higher Education. Kampala, Uganda.
- IUCEA (2013 - 2023): Benchmarks developed and published.
- International Federation of social Workers (2023): The UBUNTU, Practitioner: Social Work Perspectives. IFSW.





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