Transforming health professions education in Africa



We, senior health professionals, health professions education experts, policy-makers, health professions regulators, professional associations, representatives of Member States, and key partners across the health education and public service sectors, attending the inaugural Africa Health Professions Education Dialogue in Lusaka, Zambia from 12 to 14 November 2024, convened by the World Health Organization:

Noting with concern that while some of the 2.5 million preventable deaths in the region are due to lack of access, almost 48% are related to poor quality health services attributed to the quality of the health workforce, among other factors;

Further noting that the African region is lagging behind in the achievement of Universal Health Coverage and other indicators of human development;

Appreciating the achievements of governments, educators and stakeholders in operationalizing the Global Strategy on Human Resources for Health: Workforce 2030 and its African regional framework through the expansion of capacity to train health workers, which has increased by 70% from 150 000 graduates in 2018 to more than 255 000 in 2022, due to increased investments in health workforce training from over 4000 institutions and programmes;

Welcoming the progress made in expanding the implementation of competency-based education of health workers with about 30 countries implementing the WHO prototype curricula for nursing, midwifery and eye health, and the WHO Global Competencies and Outcomes Framework for Universal Health Coverage;

Mindful of current evidence that many countries in the region are still implementing curricula that are not aligned with population health needs, and have inadequate training infrastructure, resulting in a mismatch between the competencies and the evolving health care needs of the populations;

Recognizing that regulation and quality assurance of health professions education is critical but suboptimal, with 32 of the 47 Member States of the African region having functional regulatory bodies or authorities in the face of the increasing establishment of health professions education institutions;

Noting that competency-based education emphasizes outcome-based learning that aligns education programmes with population health needs and focuses on mastering the competencies required for effective health care delivery;

We therefore:

1. **Acknowledge** that health professions education is the single most important contributor to the development of a health workforce that responds to the health needs of Africa;

2. **Reaffirm** the need to transform health professions education curricula in the region to be competency-based and fit for purpose, to tackle the health-related challenges of our time, both in peacetime and during emergencies;

3. **Draw attention** to the Africa Health Workforce Investment Charter, whose goal is to align and stimulate investments in health worker education, employment, retention and mobility, in order to tackle the projected 6.1 million shortage of health workers and reduce inequalities in access to health workers in Africa by 50%;

4. **Acknowledge** the relevance of the following factors in transforming health professions education:
   a. competency-based curricula must meet local health needs while aligning with regional, continental and global standards;
   b. faculty skills development in competency-based and health professions education is



WHO meeting participants, Lusaka , Zambia

essential for their effective implementation;

c. digital technology should be leveraged to address the needs of educators and trainees;
d. leadership and governance in health professions must be strengthened at all levels;
e. interprofessional education is crucial for fostering collaborative practice;

We hereby:

5. **Call upon** all stakeholders to:
   a. support the transformation of health professions education in Africa;
   b. adopt competency-based education;
   c. strengthen regulation and quality assurance of health professions education;
   d. support health professional associations and networks to promote this agenda;
   e. support ministries of health to professionalize and strengthen leadership, planning and management of the health workforce;

6. **Call upon** the World Health Organization to regularly convene stakeholders to advance this transformative agenda for health professions in the Region;

7. **Extend** our appreciation to the Government and people of Zambia for hosting the Dialogue;

8. **Convey our** thanks to the World Health Organization for convening the Dialogue.

Africa HEALTH JOURNAL

Africa Health Journal (AHJ) is a review journal that does not publish original articles with some exceptions. The target audience is frontline health practitioners and policy makers in governments. Teachers and students in academic institutions will also find the content of the AHJ of interest. Online and print editions are published quarterly. There are also dedicated social media platforms with a big following from a global audience.

The journal seeks to cover a wide range of subjects from clinical care topics to health services management, education, and has a section on CPD related to the content in the current issue. The AHJ covers anything of relevance to a busy physician or senior health professional practising in Africa.

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Please send the article by email to africahealth@ achest. org. Articles should be saved as a Microsoft Word document. Illustrations and photographs should be sent as additional attachments to the Word document.

Referencing should be numerical and in the Vancouver style. If you prefer, it is acceptable to simply append a list of 'For further reading' rather than adopting the more formal referencing style.

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