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Barriers to the Participation of Young Educators in Education Unions and Leadership Roles in Africa

Research Report



Alex Nkosi
July 2025

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Foreword

Education International (EI), as a global voice of educators and education support personnel, has been at the forefront of advocating for educators' rights and the advancement of quality education. Within its African region, EI is engaged with numerous Education Unions that reflect a wide diversity of cultures, languages, and educational contexts in an ever-evolving educational landscape where the voices of young educators are vital for shaping the future of education in Africa. Despite this richness, young educators continue to face significant challenges in participating in Union activities and assuming leadership roles, limiting the capacity of Unions to fully represent the voices of the younger generation. This reality underscores a critical issue that threatens the sustainability and democratic renewal of Education Unions across the Region.

This study on “Barriers to the Participation of Young Educators in Education Unions and Leadership Roles in Africa” comes at a pivotal moment in the global education and Trades Unions landscape. It sheds light on the structural, socio-economic, and cultural barriers preventing young educators from fully engaging in Union activities and taking on leadership responsibilities. The research provides an evidence-based analysis of how these barriers manifest and offers thoughtful strategies for overcoming them, aligning with EI's commitment to inclusivity, equity, and gender equality.

Education International's mission has been to champion free, quality and publicly funded education for every student in every country where all educators can thrive, regardless of age, gender, or socio-economic background. Key findings and recommendations in this research resonate deeply with this mission, offering actionable insights that are key to driving organisational renewal and strengthening Union capacity. By addressing the challenges identified in this study, EI Africa and its member organisations can empower the next generation of educators, ensuring Unions remain strong, dynamic, and responsive to the evolving needs of education professionals.

We extend our gratitude to Mr. Alex Richard Nkosi and all who collaborated to make this research possible. I hope that this study catalyses further dialogue, action, and engagement across Africa and beyond. I commend the researchers for their rigorous analysis and for giving a voice to the experiences of young educators who are eager to contribute to the Education Union movement.

Dr. Dennis Sinyolo
Regional Director
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Table of Contents

Executive Summary.....	v
Key Recommendations.....	ix
1 Introduction.....	1
1.1 Background of Study	1
1.2 Significance of the Study	2
1.3 Context to the Study.....	2
1.4 Rationale for the Research	4
1.5 Objective of the study	5
1.6 Research Questions	5
2. Literature Review.....	7
2.1 Introduction	7
2.2 Historical Context:	8
2.3 The Evolution of Working and Living Conditions of Teachers in Africa: From Independence to Date.....	8
2.4 Educators Unions and Achievements in Policy Influence in Africa.	10
2.5 Factors Contributing to Limited Participation in Education Unions and Leadership Roles.....	11
2.5.1 Interplay of Unfavourable Political and Trades Unions Climate	11
2.5.2 Capacity Constraints and Diverse Identities.....	13
2.5.3 Negative Perceptions, Trust, and Gender Dynamics	14
2.5.4 Geographic Constraints and Socio -Economic Realities:.....	15
2.5.5 Comprehensive and Inclusive Approaches.....	16
2.5.6 Navigating the Challenges and Embracing Future Prospects.....	17
3. Methodology	18
3.1 Phase I: Desk Review	18
3.2 Phase II: Field Research	18
3.3 Data Collection Methods	18
3.3.1 Surveys	19
3.3.2 Key Informant Interviews (KII).....	19
3.4 Data Analysis and Methods	20
3.4.1 Key Informant Interviews (KIIs)	20
3.4.2 Thematic Analysis	20
3.4.3 MAXQDA Software	21
3.4.4 Excel-Based Matrix for Findings, Conclusions, and Recommendations (FCR)	22
3.4.5 Content Analysis	22
3.4.6 Triangulation	22

4	Qualitative Analysis and Discussion.....	31
4.1	Research Question 1: Young Member's Decision-making Representation	31
4.1.1	Strategies and Initiatives.....	31
4.1.2	Perceived Effectiveness.....	34
4.1.3	Challenges in Involving Young Members in Decision-Making.....	35
4.1.4	Success Stories - Young Members Influencing Union Decisions.....	36
4.2	Research Question 2: Barriers to the participation and leadership of young members.....	38
4.2.1	Barriers Faced by Young Educators	39
4.2.2	Union Actions to Overcome Barriers.....	40
4.2.3	Challenges Faced by Young Educators in Union Leadership	41
4.2.4	Diverse Barriers Faced by Young Educators in Union Leadership	42
4.2.5	Efforts to Encourage Greater Involvement of Young Educators in Union Leadership.....	42
4.2.6	Challenges and Upcoming Strategies for Encouraging Greater Involvement	43
4.3	Research Question 3: Intersectional Barriers Among Youth.....	44
4.3.1	Challenges Faced by Educators Across Different Age Groups and Union Efforts to Overcome Them.....	45
4.3.2	Impact of Geographic Factors and Cultural Differences on the Participation of Young Educators	46
4.3.3	Promoting Inclusivity among Young Educators	48
4.4	Research Question 4: Union level Challenges	49
4.4.1	Differential Participation Barriers Across Union Levels	50
4.4.2	Differential Challenges Across Union Levels.....	51
4.4.3	Strategies Employed to Address Barriers in Young Educators' Unions Across Different Levels.....	52
4.4.4	Instances of Effective Union Approaches in Addressing Barriers	53
5	Quantitative Analysis and Results.....	54
6	Recommendations.....	66

Executive Summary

Education International has long been committed to advancing the rights of educators and improving quality education. Within the Africa Region, EI Africa encompasses a diverse array of Education Sector Unions across numerous countries, languages, and cultures. Despite this potential for impactful advocacy and policy influence, barriers persist, hindering active participation and representation of young educators within Union structures.

This study delves into the challenges faced by young educators in actively engaging with Education Unions and assuming leadership roles. It addresses critical gaps hindering the Region's progress and the effectiveness of the Education sector. More specifically, this study aimed at identifying barriers, understanding their impact, investigating perceptions, and proposing strategies to empower and effectively involve young educators within Education Unions and leadership roles. Conducting research into barriers to young educators' participation is crucial for EI Africa's evidence-based decision-making, enhanced policy advocacy, sustainable impact, empowerment, inclusive spaces, and strategic resource allocation.

The significance of this study for Education International Africa lies in its commitment to empowering marginalised groups, responding to evolving Union dynamics, and democratising Union structures. It aligns with EI Africa's efforts to address gender and other inequalities that limit the participation of young educators. Moreover, the study responds to Resolutions from the 7th EI Congress, emphasising the need for Unions to adapt to changing circumstances and transform into mass participation organisations with democratic renewal.

The study employed a mixed-methods approach encompassing quantitative and qualitative methodologies across three sequential phases: a literature review, field research, and synthesis. The desk phase involved an extensive review of Education Union-related literature, establishing a theoretical base. The field phase incorporated surveys and key informant interviews (KIs) with over one thousand two hundred (1,200) respondents and nineteen (19) stakeholders across different Regions and countries in Africa, exploring young educators' perceptions and challenges in Unions and leadership roles. Data analysis utilised thematic analysis, MAXQDA software for qualitative data management, and an

Excel-based matrix to systematically organise findings, ensuring comprehensive coverage of evaluation questions. Quantitative data was analysed and graphically presented with the Excel spreadsheet software. Finally, the triangulation approach was used to validate conclusions across varied data sources, ensuring robustness in the derived insights and conclusions.

In examining the quantitative data across twenty-three (23) countries including Kenya, Côte d'Ivoire, Senegal, Burundi, Djibouti, Ethiopia, Mali, Mauritania, South Africa, Togo, Uganda, and Zanzibar, several noteworthy findings emerged. A significant proportion, around 22%, identified political and Trades Unions climates as undermining educators' rights, while 61% expressed concerns about the Unions' capacity to defend member rights, often citing restrictive labour laws as a primary limitation. Notably, barriers such as age (73%), geographical factors (more than 50%), socio-economic status (72%), and cultural factors (51%) were identified as substantial obstacles impeding the active engagement of young educators within Unions. Despite these challenges, a striking 82% of respondents expressed keen interest in assuming leadership roles, underscoring the need for specialised programmes catering for young educators' needs within these Unions.

These findings collectively underscore the urgent need for tailored strategies aimed at mitigating barriers and fostering inclusivity, reflecting a shared aspiration for increased engagement and leadership opportunities within Education Unions across these diverse contexts.

Key Findings

Firstly, the study explored how African Unions engage young members in decision-making, highlighting their commitment to inclusivity through dedicated youth committees, leadership opportunities, training programmes, and executive appointments. Despite optimism, challenges like generation gaps, lack of interest, financial constraints, and misconceptions persist.

Success stories showcased impactful contributions, including restructuring recruitment, advocating for salary increases, and enhancing technology. These findings reveal Unions' collective efforts to involve young educators actively, emphasising the need for tailored approaches to effectively engage them in decision-making processes.

Secondly, the analysis explored African Unions' engagement with young educators and barriers encountered in Lesotho, Malawi, Rwanda, Ethiopia, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Botswana, Guinea, Zimbabwe, Côte d'Ivoire, Benin, and Mali. Challenges include older members' reluctance, financial constraints, and fear of career risks. Strategies involve youth committees, recruitment updates, training, and financial incentives. In Union leadership, challenges like inexperience, geographical constraints, and gender-specific issues exist. Solutions proposed by respondents include training, mentorship, gender-specific measures, and support for inclusive leadership roles. Efforts should aim at equipping young educators despite challenges such as resistance to training and striving for enhanced capacities within the Unions.

Thirdly, the analysis explored barriers faced by young educators due to age, socio-economic status, cultural differences, and geographical challenges across Lesotho, Malawi, Rwanda, Ethiopia, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Botswana, Guinea, Zimbabwe, Côte d'Ivoire, Benin, and Mali. The Challenges included older members' resistance, financial constraints, and cultural norms limiting participation. Union strategies involved sensitisation, age limits for leadership, and inclusive approaches. Geographical barriers affected engagement, with rural challenges in Malawi, Ethiopia, and Zimbabwe, but Rwanda and Mali leveraged technology for better participation. Cultural differences hindered involvement, notably, in Senegal, Côte d'Ivoire, and Sierra Leone but Senegal introduced inclusivity departments to bridge these gaps. Efforts in Malawi and Senegal emphasised financial inclusivity, while success stories underscored unity across demographics in Côte d'Ivoire, Rwanda, Ethiopia, Mali, and Sierra Leone, highlighting the importance of inclusivity in achieving collective goals.

Finally, the analysis explored challenges faced by young educators at different Union levels and their solutions. Locally, financial constraints and distance limit participation, mitigated by partnerships in Malawi and technological outreach in Senegal. Regionally and nationally, financial hurdles persist, with specific barriers, such as language issues in Côte d'Ivoire and procedural challenges in Ethiopia. Solutions involve tailored strategies and government support, as seen in Rwanda's technological-driven initiatives and Malawi's partnerships. Challenges differ across levels: local barriers include the reluctance of the elder in leadership transition, while national issues encompass political influence and lack of experience. Strategies focus on adaptability, exemplified by Senegal's

use of virtual meetings. Successful approaches include Malawi's inclusive representation and Senegal's accessible virtual platforms, underscoring the importance of collective Union action. Overall, these insights highlight the need for targeted strategies and unified efforts to address diverse barriers across Union levels.

Key Recommendations

The recommendations put forward centre on fostering intergenerational dialogue, empowering financially, enhancing skills, and seamlessly integrating technology. The primary aim is to bridge generational divides, cultivate a supportive environment, and fortify the Union as an inclusive entity for educators of all ages-rooted in mentorship, financial incentives, and targeted communication. These recommendations seek to fortify the Union's role, equipping young educators with tools for meaningful contributions to both the Union's objectives and their professional growth.

The proposed actions include establishing platforms for intergenerational dialogue, diversifying funding sources, employing tailored communication strategies, and strengthening training programmes. Emphasis is placed on advocating for youth representation in decision-making, leveraging technology for active participation, and fostering a culture valuing diversity and equal opportunities. Mentorship initiatives and innovative funding mechanisms are encouraged to address financial constraints, while tailored communication campaigns aim at dispelling misconceptions and fostering confidence among young educators.

However, the recommendations advocate for inclusive decision-making processes, enhanced professional development, economic activities to incentivise participation, and the establishment of regulations preventing young members. Addressing challenges specific to rural areas, promoting continuous education, offering leadership opportunities, implementing gender-specific measures, and regularly evaluating strategies, form an integral part of the suggested actions. Ultimately, ongoing dialogue and adaptive strategies are recommended to sustain inclusivity and overcome emerging barriers within Unions.

1. Introduction

1.1 Background of Study

Education International Africa (EI Africa) is an international federation of Education Unions that aims at promoting and advancing the rights of educators, improving the quality of education, and fostering collaboration among education sector stakeholders. Within the Africa Region, EI encompasses a diverse array of Education sector Unions across various countries, languages, and cultures.

Education International Africa Region is made up of one hundred and twenty-one (121) affiliates in fifty-three (53) of the fifty-five (55) countries in Africa, including Lebanon and Palestine in the Middle East. Several countries have multiple Education Sector Unions making unity among and within Unions a major concern for the Region. The regional office is preoccupied with helping affiliates to develop stronger Unions and encouraging them to form united fronts.

English, French, Portuguese, and Arabic are the major official languages owing to the colonial and religious influence. There are numerous indigenous languages within the countries, although a few are spoken across several countries. The Region, therefore, contends with varied languages and cultures.

Despite the Region's potential for impactful advocacy and policy influence, barriers to active participation and representation among young educators within Union structures hinder their potential to effectively contribute to the Education sector's development.

1.2 Significance of the Study

This study is critical for Education International Africa (EI Africa) due to several compelling reasons. First, the Africa Region comprises a substantial portion of EI Africa's membership, representing one hundred and twenty-one (121) affiliates in fifty-five (55) African countries, as well as Lebanon and Palestine. This substantial representation necessitates an understanding of the challenges that young educators face in actively

participating in Union activities and leadership positions. Addressing these challenges is vital for the Region's overall progress and the effectiveness of the Education sector.

Second, EI Africa acknowledges that educators play a pivotal role in shaping the future of societies, and Unions provide a platform for them to influence policies, advocate for their rights, and contribute to the enhancement of quality education. However, young educators, who are crucial stakeholders in the Education system, face barriers that restrict their participation and influence within the Unions. These barriers do not only limit their personal growth but also hamper the representation and the voices of young educators in decision-making processes that impact on the entire Education sector.

1.3 Context to the Study

In September 2021, EI Africa launched the Africa Young Educators Network (AYEN), with a view to building the power of young teachers and education support personnel to advocate for quality public education for all and participate more actively in Union structures and activities.

At its 7th Congress, held in Ottawa, Canada in 2015, EI Africa adopted a Resolution that sought to promote, facilitate and monitor the participation of young and early-stage teachers, researchers, and support personnel from member Organisations in EI Africa activities. It was also resolved to pay close attention to gender and other inequalities that may lead to the marginalisation of certain young educators, and to let young elected members represent them in EI structures at the global and regional levels.

The deliberations on the Resolution expressed that Unions need the capacity to resist negative tendencies, such as attacks on collective bargaining rights, undermining Trades Unions, direct attacks on activists, and anti-Trades Unions laws. The need for new ways to respond to changed circumstances, to revitalise connection with members and draw them into activity while transforming mass membership organisations to mass participation organisations with democratic renewal, was highlighted.

This pointed to improving participation of underrepresented groups, creating ways to organise around professional issues while maintaining the industrial leg, becoming campaigning Organisations by reframing narratives on issues like education funding and building alliances with students, parents, civil society organisations, and others. Unions also need to rethink Union structures to be more inclusive and participatory while making the Union present in the lives of members in the workplace. With this backdrop, Education International Africa seeks to carry out research into the barriers to the participation of young educators in activities of the Union structures and activities with a view to improving the contribution to Union effectiveness.

With this backdrop, Education International Africa's research study holds significant importance for the following reasons:

- *Empowering the Marginalised:* The study aligns with EI's commitment to addressing gender and other inequalities that marginalise certain young educators. It seeks to provide a comprehensive understanding of the specific barriers these marginalised groups face in actively participating in Union activities.
- *Responding to Changing Dynamics:* The 7th Congress Resolutions highlight the necessity for Unions to effectively respond to changing circumstances, including attacks on collective bargaining rights and evolving trends in Union activism. The study can identify barriers that prevent young educators from effectively engaging in the evolving landscape of Education Unionism.
- *Democratisation of Union Structures:* The Resolutions call for a transformation from mass membership organisations to mass participation organisations with democratic renewal. This study can shed light on the obstacles preventing young educators from actively engaging in decision-making processes, thereby contributing to the democratisation of Union structures.

1.4 Rationale for the Research

Conducting research into barriers to young educators' participation in Union activities within the Africa Region, is critically important for Education International Africa (EI Africa) for several compelling reasons:

- a. *Evidence-Based Decision-Making*: Research provides empirical evidence that informs decision-making and strategy formulation. Identifying and understanding barriers to young educator participation can help EI Africa to effectively tailor its initiatives and interventions. As *Martin and Turner (1986)* suggest, evidence-based decision-making is crucial for organisations seeking to achieve their goals.
- b. *Enhanced Policy Advocacy*: Robust research findings enhance the credibility of policy advocacy efforts. By identifying barriers and their impact on young educators' participation, EI Africa can advocate for policy changes that promote inclusivity and participation, as emphasised by *Leung and Armstrong (2020)* in their study on Education Policy Advocacy.
- c. *Sustainable Impact*: Research allows for the development of sustainable solutions. By uncovering the root causes of barriers to participation, EI can implement strategies that address these causes, contributing to long-lasting impact, as highlighted by *Armstrong and Hastie (2019)* in their research into Sustainable Development.
- d. *Empowerment and Inclusion*: Research supports the empowerment of marginalised groups. Understanding the challenges faced by young educators from underrepresented backgrounds can guide efforts to create inclusive spaces, as explored by *Vergara, Carim, and Gabiola (2020)* in their study on inclusive education.
- e. *Strategic Resource Allocation*: Research aids in efficient resource allocation. Knowing where barriers exist and their impact, allows EI to allocate resources strategically for capacity-building programmes and initiatives that specifically target these barriers,

as discussed by *Hitt, Ireland, and Hoskisson (2020)* in their work on Strategic Management.

1.5 Objective of the Study

The study aims at achieving the following objectives:

- i. Identify the barriers that prevent young educators from actively participating in Education Unions and seeking leadership roles.
- ii. Understand the impact of these barriers on the representation and voice of young educators in decision-making processes.
- iii. Investigate the perceptions of young educators regarding the benefits and challenges of joining Education Unions and assuming leadership positions.
- iv. Propose strategies and recommendations to overcome these barriers and enhance the involvement of young educators in Education Unions and assuming leadership positions.

1.6 Research Questions

The study seeks to answer the following six questions

1. How do the Unions seek to represent the interests of young members and include them in decision-making?
2. What are the main barriers to the participation and leadership of young members in Education Unions? What have the Unions done to overcome these barriers?
3. Are there different barriers (within and outside the Unions) linked to age, geography, socio-economic status, culture, family status et cetera among young members? What has the Union done to overcome these barriers?
4. Are there different barriers to be found at different levels of the Unions (local, regional, and national)? How will these be overcome?

5. Do the Unions have policies and/or have acted to increase participation in Union activities and decision-making? How have they been effective?
6. What more can Unions do to increase the involvement of young members in Union activities, structures and leadership?

2. Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

The historical trajectory of Teacher Unions in Africa is intrinsically intertwined with the broader struggles for labour rights, social justice, and education reforms. This narrative unfolds across the colonial and post-colonial epochs, underscored by the profound agency that teachers exhibited in advocating for improved working conditions, equitable remuneration, and the delivery of quality education to all strata of society. The establishment of these Unions, often emerging as integral components of larger anti-colonial movements, reflects a resolute endeavour to ensure education that is not only responsive to the local cultural milieu but also supportive and fostering the indigenous knowledge and languages, hence catering for the multifaceted aspirations of the populace.

2.2 Historical Context:

The foundational basis of Teachers' Unions within the historical context of Africa's struggle for liberation is notably emblematic of the nuanced intersectionality between education and broader socio-political agendas. A seminal example of this symbiotic relationship is witnessed through the formation of the Uganda National Teachers' Union (UNATU) during the 1950s. This significant milestone in African education history represented an epochal juncture where the collective voice of educators resonated with the aspirations of the broader society. By advocating for the enhancement of teachers' rights and by shaping education policies congruent with the objectives of decolonisation, UNATU exemplified the profound impact that Teacher Unions could exert as formidable drivers of transformative social change.

Scholars within the realm of African education history, such as *Mamdani* (1993), astutely underscore the intricate confluence of Education, politics, and resistance during the colonial epoch. They illuminate the pivotal role that teachers played as vanguards of local identity and cultural heritage within a hegemonic educational framework. The emergence of Teacher

Unions as vehicles for labour rights and social justice echoes the resonant narrative of local educators as active agents in reshaping the post-colonial educational landscape.

Mamdani (1993) vividly portrays the historical mosaic wherein Teacher Unions became instrumental in fostering a consciousness that transcended the confines of classrooms, influencing the socio-political terrain and catalysing the pursuit of independence. This resonates palpably with the broader historical continuum across the African Continent, where Teacher Unions evolved as hubs of resistance against the pedagogical and social tenets propagated by colonial powers.

Moreover, within the post-colonial discourse, scholars like *Mundy (2012)* to delve into the intricate dynamics that coalesce around Teacher Unions as beacons of education reform. Mundy (2012) sheds light on the multifarious ways in which educators leveraged their Unions to engage in dialogues surrounding curricular reform, equitable access to education, and the infusion of indigenous languages into pedagogical practices. The discourse and action perpetuated by these Unions lay the foundation for a locally relevant, culturally sensitive Education system that remains resilient against the homogenising currents of neo-colonialism.

2.3 The Evolution of Working and Living Conditions of Teachers in Africa: From Independence to Date.

The post-independence era marked a pivotal juncture in Africa's history, characterised by aspirations for self-determination, social progress, and economic development. In the midst of all these transformative shifts, the working and living conditions of teachers underwent dynamic changes that mirrored the Continent's evolving socio-political landscape.

The aftermath of decolonisation witnessed a surge of optimism, with newly independent African nations striving to enhance education as a cornerstone of development. Teachers occupied a central role in this endeavour, charged with nurturing the human capital required for nation-building. However, the initial years were marred by resource constraints, as highlighted by *Lewis (1996)*, which adversely affected teachers' remuneration, professional development opportunities, and overall wellbeing.

The evolution of teachers' working and living conditions in Africa was intricately linked to shifts in educational policies. The 1970s and 1980s witnessed a proliferation of populist policies that aimed at expanding access to education. However, the rapid increase in student enrolment outstripped resource allocation, leading to overcrowded classrooms and limited access to teaching materials. *Okebukola (2009)* underscores how these factors culminated in deteriorating working conditions, influencing teachers' morale and the overall quality of education.

The adoption of structural adjustment and austerity measures in the 1980s and 1990s, under the influence of international financial institutions, exacerbated the challenges faced by teachers. Cuts in public spending led to reduction of salaries of teachers, teachers limited resources for professional development, and inadequate infrastructure. The impact of these measures is vividly documented by *Kanyenze et al. (2006)*, who elucidated how teachers' socio-economic wellbeing was imperilled by these policy shifts.

The turn of the millennium witnessed a shift toward recognising the central role of teachers in achieving sustainable development. African countries, guided by frameworks, such as the "Education For All" initiative, began to address teachers' conditions through policies aimed at professionalisation and capacity-building. Initiatives such as the African Union's Continental Education Strategy for Africa (CESA) emphasised the importance of improving teachers' status, salaries, and access to professional development.

Amidst the advancements in education policy and the recognition of teachers' pivotal role, persistent challenges cast a shadow over the aspirations of improved working and living conditions for educators in Africa. These challenges stem and continue to do so from a complex interplay of economic, social, and systemic factors that demand nuanced strategies for resolution and underscore the imperative for sustainable development in the Education sector.

- *Inadequate Salaries and Economic Pressures:* In many African countries, teachers continue to grapple with inadequate salaries that

fail to reflect the critical importance of their profession. Low compensation not only affects teachers' standard of living but also hampers their morale and dedication to their vocation. As highlighted by *Swinnerton and Rogers (2002)*, low teacher salaries are often linked to broader economic challenges, and addressing this issue necessitates not only localised efforts but also comprehensive economic reforms that prioritise investment in human capital.

- *Lack of Teacher Housing and Infrastructure:* The lack of suitable housing for teachers remains an ongoing concern, particularly in remote and rural areas. Inadequate infrastructure compounds this issue, affecting both the quality of education and the wellbeing of teachers. The absence of proper living conditions not only affects teacher retention but also hinders the delivery of quality education to students. Research by *Darmody and Smyth (2010)* underscores the need for policies that address teacher housing and infrastructure as integral components of educational development.

Limited Access to Professional Development: The dynamic nature of Education demands continuous professional development for teachers to remain effective in their roles. However, limited access to relevant high quality professional development opportunities continues to hinder the growth of teachers and capacity building. As emphasised by *Darling-Hammond (2017)*, investing in teachers' professional learning is essential for fostering instructional excellence and adapting to evolving educational paradigms.

2.4 Educators Unions and Achievements in Policy Influence in Africa.

Teacher Unions in Africa have emerged as formidable catalysts of change within the realm of education policy development and reforms, their efforts yielding profound impact on various dimensions of educational equity and access (*Williams, 2007*). The trajectory of these Unions is a testament to their unwavering commitment to advocate for policies that encompass fundamental principles of quality education, equitable resource allocation, and professional advancement for educators. Their proactive

engagement has borne fruit in the form of transformative policy shifts that have resonated across the African educational landscape.

The resolute advocacy of Teacher Unions has garnered notable successes in shaping policies that prioritise universal access to quality education. By virtue of their substantial influence, these Unions have consistently championed policies aimed at dismantling barriers to education and fostering inclusive environments. One notable instance of this influence is reflected through the prioritisation of mother-tongue instruction. *Williams (2007)* underscores the pedagogical advantages of mother-tongue instruction in fostering enhanced learning outcomes among students, and Teacher Unions have been instrumental in advocating for its integration into curricula. The impact of these efforts extends beyond linguistics, as mother-tongue instruction promotes cultural preservation and fosters a sense of identity among learners.

Moreover, the commitment of Teacher Unions to the principles of gender equality is noteworthy. These Unions have been at the forefront of advocating for policies that ensure equitable opportunities for all genders within the Education sector. Their efforts align seamlessly with the broader objectives of gender mainstreaming in education, as elucidated by *Saito et al. (2006)*. Teacher Unions have played a pivotal role in shaping policies that counteract gender-based discrimination, ensuring that educational opportunities are extended without bias. This commitment to gender parity extends beyond policy formulation, as these Unions are also engaged in fostering safe and inclusive educational environments that nurture the holistic development of all learners.

2.5 Factors Contributing to Limited Participation in Education Unions and Leadership Roles.

2.5.1 Interplay of Unfavourable Political and Trades Unions Climate

The intricate interplay between the unfavourable political and Trades Unions climate and the challenges faced by young educators in Africa are a critical aspect that shapes their limited participation in Education Unions and leadership roles.

The unfavourable political and Trades Union climate in many African countries constitutes a significant obstacle to the effective functioning of Education Unions and the meaningful participation of young educators. As highlighted by Frempong and *Kumi-Kyereme (2021)*, restrictive labour laws, government's disregard for established labour regulations, and anti-Trades Unions legislation collectively create a challenging environment that undermines the autonomy and capacity of Education Unions. This climate curtails Unions' ability to advocate for the rights and welfare of their members, including young educators.

This constrained advocacy capacity not only impedes the aspirations of young educators for fair treatment and improved working conditions but also reverberates throughout the broader education system. In support of this view, *Jackson (2005)* emphasises that the limited ability of Education Unions to influence policy and advocate for educators' rights directly affects the quality of education provided to students. The erosion of educators' rights, stemming from the inability of Unions to effectively engage in the political sphere, which can result in lower morale among educators, leading to reduced commitment and enthusiasm in classrooms. Consequently, the quality of education suffers, perpetuating a vicious cycle where the very educators who could contribute to educational excellence are disheartened and discouraged.

In addition, the unfavourable political and Trades Union's climate not only hampers the present but also threatens the future of education in Africa. The participation of young educators in Education Unions and leadership roles is crucial for shaping innovative pedagogical approaches, curriculum development, and policy formulation that address the evolving needs of students and society at large. However, when young educators witness Unions struggling to bring about meaningful change due to systemic barriers, they may become disillusioned and reluctant to invest their energy into Union activities or aspire to leadership roles.

Moreover, the consequences of this interplay extend beyond the immediate educational realm. The erosion of educators' rights and the weakened influence of Education Unions contribute to the perpetuation of social inequalities. As education remains a powerful catalyst for social

mobility and economic growth, the limitations on educators' capacity to provide quality education undermine the prospects of young learners, particularly those from marginalised backgrounds. This underscores the urgent need for comprehensive reforms that address not only the barriers young educators face but also the systemic factors that constrain the effectiveness of Education Unions.

2.5.2 Capacity Constraints and Diverse Identities

Capacity constraints and diverse identities are two critical aspects that significantly impact the support and opportunities available to young educators within Education Unions. An important aspect to consider is how capacity constraints differ across regions within a country. National level Education Unions typically benefit from greater resources and infrastructure, allowing them to offer more comprehensive support to their members. In contrast, Regional or Local Unions may grapple with limited budgets, personnel, and access to training opportunities. For instance, a study conducted by *Smith et al. (2020)* found that Education Unions in metropolitan areas tend to have more robust mentoring programmes, professional development workshops, and networking events compared to those in rural areas due to differences in funding allocation.

Diverse identities play a crucial role in shaping the support young educators receive within Education Unions. These identities encompass a range of factors such as gender, ethnicity, socio-economic background, and more. To illustrate, a study by *Johnson and Lee (2019)*, highlighted that female educators and educators from marginalised communities often face additional barriers to accessing leadership roles within Education Unions, contributing to a lack of diverse representation in decision-making processes.

Thus, it is essential to recognise that a uniform approach to addressing capacity constraints and supporting diverse identities may not effectively cater for the unique needs of all young educators. Rather, a nuanced and tailored approach is necessary to account for the specific challenges faced by different groups. For instance, a standardised mentoring programme might not consider the varying needs of educators with disabilities.

Acknowledging this limitation, *Smith (2021)* emphasised the importance of adopting an intersectional lens to identify overlapping identities and barriers that may require specialised strategies.

2.5.3 Negative Perceptions, Trust, and Gender Dynamics

The intersection of negative perceptions, trust, and gender dynamics within the context of Education Unions in Africa plays a pivotal role in shaping the experiences and aspirations of young educators.

Building Trust and Alleviating Negative Perceptions: While discussions about negative perceptions and trust deficits surrounding Education Unions are crucial, an exploration of strategies to foster trust and counter these negative perceptions is equally important. Transparency and accountability mechanisms can play a pivotal role in bridging this gap. For instance, the implementation of regular progress reports, financial transparency, and clear communication of Unions' activities can contribute to increased trust among members (*Jones & Williams, 2022*). Highlighting instances where Education Unions have successfully advocated for improved working conditions and benefits can serve as powerful examples of their positive impact (*Chen et al., 2020*). Through these measures, Unions can actively demonstrate their commitment to the wellbeing and professional growth of young educators.

Gender Dynamics and Leadership Aspirations: A nuanced understanding of gender dynamics is imperative in addressing the gender disparities within Education Unions in African contexts. African societies are characterised by diverse cultural norms and practices that shape gender roles and perceptions. To effectively navigate these dynamics, it is essential to recognise that gender experiences and expectations vary significantly across regions and communities. Research by *Nkrumah et al. (2019)* revealed that while some African societies encourage women's participation in Education leadership, others may exhibit more traditional gender norms that hinder women's access to leadership positions.

Cultural Sensitivity and Inclusivity: Appreciating the cultural nuances within African societies is fundamental for Education Unions seeking to empower young educators of all genders. Education Unions can promote

inclusivity by facilitating dialogue and training sessions that sensitise members to these dynamics. Collaborative efforts that involve local community leaders and educators can lead to tailored strategies that respect cultural values while promoting gender equality and leadership opportunities (*Munyakazi & Nzayisenga, 2018*).

2.5.4 Geographic Constraints and Socio-Economic Realities:

Geographic constraints and socio-economic realities exert considerable influence on the experiences of young educators within Education Unions. The vast and diverse landscapes of many countries present geographical challenges that can hinder effective Education Union engagement, particularly in rural and remote areas. Education Unions have started to address these constraints by embracing technology-driven approaches. For instance, the Ugandan National Teachers' Union (UNATU) established virtual platforms to provide educators in remote areas with access to professional development workshops and resources (*Kamugisha & Kyohairwe, 2021*). Such initiatives underscore the potential of technology to bridge geographical gaps and create a sense of unity among educators across diverse Regions.

Addressing Socio-Economic Barriers through Financial Support: Socio-economic disparities often intersect with educators' ability to actively engage in Education Unions. The cost associated with Union membership fees, travel expenses for meetings and conferences, and professional development opportunities can deter young educators from low socio-economic backgrounds. To mitigate these challenges, Education Unions can consider implementing financial support mechanisms. For instance, the Zimbabwe Teachers' Association (ZIMTA) offers subsidised membership fees and travel grants to ensure that financial constraints do not hinder participation (*Chikoko & Ncube, 2018*). By doing so, Unions can actively promote inclusivity and equity.

Fostering Collaboration with Community Partnerships: Collaboration with community-based organisations, local governments, and Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) can be an effective strategy to overcome both geographic constraints and socio-economic barriers. These partnerships can facilitate the organisation of local workshops,

networking events, and resources, thereby creating opportunities for engagement even in areas with limited resources. The success of the partnership between the Malawi Union of Teachers (MUT) and local NGOs in providing professional development opportunities in underserved areas exemplifies how such collaborations can address multi-dimensional challenges (Makwinja & Chatha, 2019).

2.5.5 Comprehensive and Inclusive Approaches

Comprehensive and inclusive approaches are pivotal for Education Unions seeking to provide meaningful support to young educators. This section delves into the practical realm by highlighting specific examples of policies, programmes, and initiatives that have effectively navigated the intersections of comprehensive and inclusive approaches.

Empowering Young Educators through Mentorship Programmes: Mentorship programmes tailored to young educators represent a comprehensive approach that fosters professional development, skill enhancement, and a sense of belonging within Education Unions. The New Zealand Educational Institute (NZEI) successfully implemented a mentorship programme that pairs experienced educators with newcomers, facilitating knowledge transfer and providing a support network (NZEI Te Riu Roa, 2020). Such programmes offer practical guidance and empower young educators to navigate the challenges of the education landscape while feeling connected to the Union's community.

Region-Specific Capacity-Building Workshops: Recognising the unique needs and challenges of educators across diverse Regions, Education Unions can adopt a comprehensive and inclusive approach by offering region-specific capacity-building workshops. The Australian Education Union (AEU) exemplifies this approach by organising workshops that address issues prevalent in different States, ensuring the content is relevant and applicable (AEU, 2019). These workshops provide targeted support, enhance professional growth, and reinforce the Union's commitment to understanding and addressing regional nuances.

Dispelling Negative Perceptions through Campaigns: Comprehensive and inclusive approaches also involve tackling negative perceptions that

may deter young educators from engaging with Education Unions. Campaigns aimed at dispelling these perceptions can be powerful tools for change. The National Union of Teachers (NUT) in the United Kingdom launched a campaign titled "Union: Yes" that emphasised the Union's role in advocating for educators' rights and promoting positive contributions to education (NUT, 2018). By altering perceptions, such campaigns can enhance Union credibility and attract greater participation from young educators.

Promoting Diversity and Inclusion through Identity-Specific Initiatives: Inclusive approaches extend to acknowledging and addressing diverse identities within Education Unions, that is, teachers with disabilities. Tailored initiatives can create a sense of belonging for educators from marginalised backgrounds. Such identity-specific initiatives underline the Union's commitment to inclusivity and amplify the voices of underrepresented educators.

2.5.6 Navigating the Challenges and Embracing Future Prospects

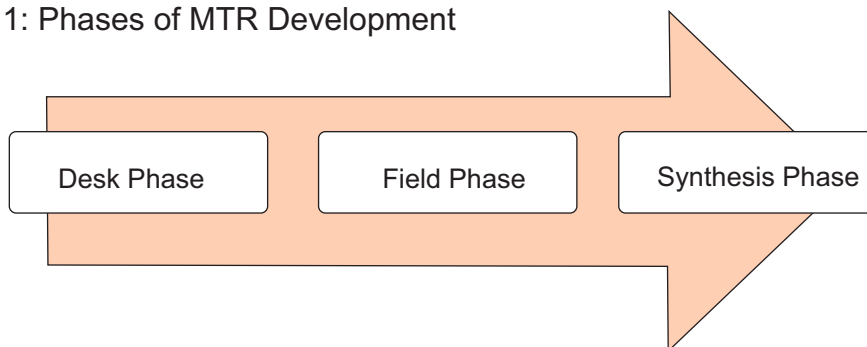
As Africa navigates the complexities of globalisation, technological advancement, and the knowledge economy, the role of teachers assumes unprecedented significance. Teachers are not only disseminators of knowledge but also facilitators of critical thinking, creativity, and adaptability – skills that are paramount in an ever-changing world. Harnessing the transformative power of technology and innovative teaching methodologies becomes imperative in preparing students for the challenges and opportunities of the 21st Century.

The African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child and the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights reinforce the imperative of equitable working conditions for teachers. These Charters underscore the notion that teachers' wellbeing is intrinsically linked to the realisation of broader human rights and societal development. The recognition of teachers as key stakeholders, as advocated by the UNESCO Recommendation concerning the *Status of Higher Education Teaching Personnel* (1997), necessitates a comprehensive approach to address challenges and bolster teachers' capacity.

3. Methodology

To address the Study Objectives, a mixed-methods approach that combines quantitative and qualitative research methods was adopted. The research was conducted in three consequent phases, namely: a desk phase, a field phase, and a synthesis phase.

Fig. 1: Phases of MTR Development



3.1 Phase I: Desk Review

A comprehensive review of existing literature, reports, and studies related to Education Unions, leadership, and the barriers faced by young educators in Africa was conducted. This review provided a solid theoretical foundation for the study and contribution to a better understanding of the context and factors influencing young educators' participation in Unions and leadership roles.

3.2 Phase II: Field Research

The field phase started immediately after the inception report was approved. It involved conducting a survey with the young educators themselves and conducting key informant interviews with relevant EI Africa staff and any other key stakeholder that EI Africa recommended. Additionally, a focused group discussion was organised with relevant groups to discuss topical issues drawn from the Study Objectives.

3.3 Data Collection Methods

The data for the research was collected through two main approaches: (i) administration of a survey instruments; and (ii) key informant interviews.

3.3.1 Surveys

An online survey was administered to young educators across African countries (West Africa, East Africa, North Africa, Southern Africa, and Central Africa) to gather quantitative data on the perceptions, experiences, and challenges related to Education Unions and leadership participation. In all, one thousand two hundred and nine (1,209) questionnaires were analysed. The survey questionnaire was designed to capture demographic information, barriers faced by young educators, their perceptions of Union activities, and their aspirations for leadership roles. The survey data was analysed, using descriptive statistical techniques to identify patterns and frequencies.

3.3.2 Key Informant Interviews (KIIs)

Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) were conducted with EI Africa staff, Union leaders including Africa Young Educators Network (AYEN) leaders and members, and the key stakeholders recommended by EI Africa. The interviews lasted approximately thirty (30) minutes to one and a half hours each. Data was collected from nineteen (19) individuals through KIIs with key stakeholders. These interviews provided in-depth insights into the barriers faced by young educators, their experiences within Education Unions, and their perceptions of leadership opportunities. The interviews were audio-recorded, transcribed, and analysed thematically to identify common themes and perspectives.

The full list of interview participants is presented in the table 1:

Table 1: Expected Number of KIIs and FGDs by Stakeholder Group

Method	Stakeholder	Total
KIIs	EI Personnel (Ghana Office)	4
	AYEN members	6
	Key Stakeholder – to be agreed with EI	2

Method	Stakeholder	Total
KIs	Educators Trades Unions Leaders	4
Total KI Participants		16
FGDs	AYEN	16
	Trades Unions Leaders	12
Total FGD Participants		28
Grand Total		<u>44</u>

3.4 Data Analysis and Methods

Data analysis and methods employed were designed to provide comprehensive insights into the challenges faced by young educators, their experiences within Education Unions, and their perspectives on leadership opportunities.

3.4.1 Key Informant Interviews (KIs)

The research team conducted KIs with a diverse group of participants, which encompassed EI Africa staff, Union leaders, with a specific focus on the Africa Young Educators Network (AYEN) leaders and members, as well as key stakeholders recommended by EI Africa. A total of nineteen (19) individuals were interviewed, with each interview lasting approximately thirty minutes (30) to one and a half hours.

3.4.2 Thematic Analysis

The data collected through KIs were rich in content. The interviews were audio-recorded and subsequently transcribed. To derive meaningful insights, a thematic analysis approach was employed to identify common themes and perspectives across the interviews.

3.4.3 MAXQDA Software

The MAXQDA software was instrumental in handling and analysing the qualitative data collected. Here is how it supported the data analysis process:

- **Data Management:** MAXQDA was used for efficient data management, enabling the structured organisation, labelling, and categorisation of extensive qualitative data, including interviews, focus group discussions, and document analysis.
- **Coding and Categorisation:** The software offered a range of tools for systematic coding of qualitative data, making it possible to identify recurring themes, patterns, and key findings.
- **Cross-Referencing:** MAXQDA facilitated cross-referencing among different data sources, a valuable feature for triangulating information to validate findings and achieve a comprehensive understanding of specific issues.
- **Query and Search Functions:** The search and query functions within MAXQDA were used to locate specific data segments related to research questions or themes, streamlining the analysis process.
- **Thematic Analysis:** MAXQDA supported thematic analysis, allowing for the identification, definition, and analysis of themes and patterns within the data.
- **Data Interpretation:** The software provided tools for interpreting and making sense of qualitative data, including the ability to add memoranda and annotations for reflection on findings and connections within the data.
- **Quality Control:** Ensuring data integrity and quality control was essential, and MAXQDA helped to maintain consistency in coding and analysis processes, reducing the risk of errors or bias.

3.4.4 Excel-Based Matrix for Findings, Conclusions, and Recommendations (FCR)

The research team transferred the results of the analysis into an Excel-based matrix. This matrix systematically categorised the analysis by Evaluation Questions (EQ). This approach ensured that the preparation of the report was systematic and thorough, accounting for each EQ. Additionally, it verified that the analysis considered gender, human rights, and social dimensions. It also identified any gaps where further clarification or analysis might have been required and served as the basis for developing the evaluation report.

3.4.5 Content Analysis

Content analysis encompassed the researcher's meticulous examination and structured categorisation of Key Informant Interview (KII) transcripts and notes. This approach aimed at pinpointing and emphasising prevalent themes and their recurrence throughout the data. Subsequently, the information was synthesised and standardised to gain a deeper comprehension of the phenomena.

3.4.6 Triangulation

Analytical triangulation was used to crosscheck and validate emerging findings derived from content analysis across multiple data sources (qualitative and quantitative). This approach aimed at identifying patterns and connections within the findings, facilitating the formulation of robust conclusions.

Table 2: Triangulation Designs to be Employed by the Study

No	Types of Triangulations	Added Value on the Quality of the Evaluation
1.	Triangulation of information sources	Prevents dependence on an "informant" and the risk of biased information
2.	Triangulation of data collection tools	It allows the instrumental framework of the assessment to be optimised, with the limitations of each tool being mitigated by the qualities of another.
3.	Triangulation of methods or angles of analysis	It allows reaching exhaustive judgements

In sum, the following Interview guide was developed to guide the conversation:

Research Question I: How do the Unions seek to represent the interests of young members and include them in decision-making?

Individual Interview Questions:

1. Can you describe the strategies or initiatives that the Union has implemented to represent the interests of young members?

Probing Questions:

- How are these strategies tailored to the unique needs of young members?
- Can you provide specific examples of projects or programmes aimed at engaging young educators?
- How do these strategies differ from those targeting other age groups?
- How do you measure the success of these strategies in

representing young members' interests?

2. How are young educators encouraged to participate in decision-making processes within the Union?

Probing Questions:

- What channels or platforms are provided for young educators to voice their opinions?
 - How is information about decision-making processes communicated to young members?
 - Are there opportunities for direct interaction between young educators and Union leadership?
 - How do you ensure that the perspectives of young members are taken serious in decision-making?
3. What challenges, if any, has the Union faced in effectively involving young members in decision-making?

Probing Questions:

- Are there any misconceptions or stereotypes about young educators that hinder their participation?
 - Have you encountered any resistance from older members in accepting the inputs of young educators?
 - Are there communication barriers that make it difficult for young educators to engage?
 - How has the Union addressed or attempted to overcome these challenges?
4. Can you provide examples of successful instances where young members' perspectives influenced Union decisions?

Probing Questions:

- Could you share a specific decision or policy change that resulted from young educators' inputs?
- How was the impact of these inputs measured or evaluated?
- Have there been cases where young educators brought up issues that were not previously considered?
- What mechanisms are in place to ensure the sustainability of incorporating young members' perspectives into decision-making?

Research Question II: What are the main barriers to the participation and leadership of young members in Education Unions? What has the Union done to overcome these barriers?

Individual Interview Questions:

1. From your perspective, what are the primary obstacles that hinder young educators from actively participating in the Union's activities?

Probing Questions:

- Are there generational factors that contribute to these participation barriers?
 - Do financial or time constraints play a significant role in deterring young members' involvement?
 - How do these barriers vary between entry-level educators and those with more experience?
 - Can you provide specific scenarios where these obstacles have been particularly evident?
2. Can you provide examples of barriers that young educators face in taking up leadership roles within the Union?

Probing Questions:

- Are there certain leadership positions that young educators tend to avoid and why?
 - How do you see gender dynamics influencing the willingness of young educators to assume leadership roles?
 - What challenges have young educators expressed about stepping into leadership positions traditionally held by older members?
 - Can you describe instances where efforts were made to remove or mitigate these barriers?
3. Have there been any efforts or strategies employed by the Union to address these barriers and encourage greater involvement?

Probing Questions:

- How have these strategies evolved over time to match changing circumstances?
 - Can you elaborate on any mentorship or training programmes designed to support young educators in overcoming barriers?
 - Are there initiatives that focus specifically on empowering young educators to overcome participation hurdles?
 - How do these efforts align with broader Union goals and values?
4. How successful have these efforts been in overcoming barriers to participation and leadership among young members?

Probing Questions:

- What metrics or indicators are used to measure the success of these efforts?
- Can you share specific stories or testimonies from young educators who benefited from these strategies?
- In what areas do you think the Union could further enhance its approach to better address these barriers?

- How do you envisage the long-term impact of these efforts on the Union's composition and direction?

Research Question III: Are there different barriers (within and outside the Unions) linked to age, geography, socio-economic status, culture, family status, et cetera. among young members? What has the Union done to overcome these barriers?

Individual Interview Questions:

1. Could you identify any unique challenges faced by young educators from diverse backgrounds, such as different age groups or socio-economic statuses?

Probing Questions:

- How do these challenges differ from those faced by young educators from more traditional backgrounds?
 - Can you provide examples of how these challenges have impacted young educators' participation?
 - Are there intersections between these various factors that compound the barriers?
2. Have geographical factors or cultural differences played a role in limiting the participation of young educators in certain Regions?

Probing Questions:

- Are there specific Regions where young educators face more pronounced challenges?
 - Can you describe instances where cultural norms or geographical isolation have hindered young members' engagement?
 - How has the Union navigated these challenges to ensure inclusivity across diverse contexts?
3. What specific measures has the Union taken to address the barriers

associated with age, socio-economic status, or cultural diversity?

Probing Questions:

- Could you share examples of initiatives that were specifically designed to cater for the needs of young educators from different backgrounds?
 - How do these measures take into account the intersectionality of various barriers?
 - Have there been instances where tailored approaches were not successful, and if so, what were the lessons learned?
4. Can you share instances where the Union's efforts have successfully created a more inclusive environment for young educators from various backgrounds?

Probing Questions:

- Can you provide anecdotes of young educators overcoming barriers and finding a strong sense of belonging within the Union?
- How do you gauge the impact of these efforts on young educators' overall engagement?
- Are there ongoing challenges in ensuring a consistent and inclusive experience for young members from diverse backgrounds?

Research Question IV: Are there different barriers to be found at different levels of the Unions (local, regional, and national)? How might these be overcome?

Individual Interview Questions:

1. Could you highlight any differences in participation barriers experienced by young educators at the local, regional, and national levels of the Union?

Probing Questions:

- What unique factors contribute to barriers at each level of the Union?
 - Do these barriers primarily stem from the nature of activities or from structural differences?
 - How do these barriers impact young educators' progression through different levels of involvement?
2. Are there specific challenges that seem to be more prevalent at one level compared to others?

Probing Questions:

- How do differences in leadership styles or expectations contribute to variations in challenges?
 - Are there instances where young educators face fewer barriers at certain levels compared to others?
 - Can you describe examples of how young educators have successfully overcome challenges at specific levels?
3. Based on your observations, have the strategies employed to address these barriers been consistent across all levels, or varied?

Probing Questions:

- How do you balance the need for consistent strategies with the need to adapt to different levels' unique dynamics?
 - Can you provide instances where strategies were modified to suit the challenges faced at a specific level?
 - How do you ensure that adjustments made at one level do not inadvertently create new barriers at another?
4. Can you share instances where the Union's approach effectively addressed barriers at a particular level?

Probing Questions:

- What lessons have been learned from successfully addressing challenges at one level that can be applied to others?
- How do you measure the long-term impact of these approaches on young educators' overall engagement?
- What factors contribute to the scalability of strategies from one level to another within the Union?

4 Qualitative Analysis and Discussion

Critically analysing young members' interest in Union activity is a key objective of the study. In this regard, our aim was to unravel the challenges faced by young educators in actively engaging with Education Unions, thereby identifying key obstacles and opportunities for their inclusion in Union activities and decision-making processes.

To comprehensively illuminate these barriers in our analysis, we explored the strategies and initiatives adopted by Education Unions to represent the interests of their young members. We scrutinised how these strategies are tailored to cater for the unique needs of young educators, focusing on concrete examples of projects or programmes geared towards their engagement.

Furthermore, the analysis delves into the means by which young educators are encouraged to participate in Union decision-making processes. We closely examine the channels and platforms provided for them to voice their opinions and explore the transparency and inclusivity of these processes. Special emphasis was placed on assessing opportunities for direct interaction between young educators and Union leadership, as well as the measures implemented to ensure that the perspectives of young members are taken serious during decision-making.

4.1 Research Question 1: Young Member's Decision-making Representation

To answer Research Question I, which delves into how Unions seek to represent the interests of young members and include them in decision-making, an analysis was conducted based on responses from various Union representatives across different African countries. The analysis aimed at identifying common strategies and initiatives implemented by these Unions and gauge the perceived effectiveness of these efforts.

4.1.1 Strategies and Initiatives

The responses from Union representatives in Lesotho, Malawi, Rwanda,

Ethiopia, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Botswana, Guinea, Zimbabwe, Côte d'Ivoire, Benin, and Mali collectively revealed a commitment to inclusivity as a core strategy for involving young members in decision-making.

Unions across these African countries have taken significant steps to provide structured platforms for young educators' engagement. For example, they have formed dedicated youth committees or departments to ensure young members have a structured voice in the Union's decision-making processes. Another recurring strategy involved recruiting and mobilising young leaders. For instance, Rwanda has actively mobilised young leaders through a dedicated recruiting team, emphasising their importance for the Union's future. Such efforts aim at creating a sustainable leadership pipeline that ensures the continuity of the Union. Leadership opportunities for young members were consistently emphasised. Unions have been proactive in creating roles where young members can actively participate in the decision-making process. Notably, in Botswana, young members were reported to hold leadership positions where significant decisions were made.

Additionally, training and capacity building initiatives were implemented in several countries, such as Benin and Côte d'Ivoire. These programmes aimed at equipping young educators with the necessary skills and knowledge to engage actively in Union affairs. Through training, Unions sought to demonstrate the significance of young members in shaping the Union's future. Furthermore, many Unions across these countries have ensured the active inclusion of young members in decision-making processes by appointing them to executive positions. For instance, Côte d'Ivoire, Senegal, and Zimbabwe reported that young members held executive roles, allowing their voices to be heard and considered in vital decision-making processes.

The strategies and initiatives employed by Unions across Malawi, Senegal, Rwanda, Benin, Ethiopia, Mali, Côte d'Ivoire, Zimbabwe, Benin, Sierra Leone, Lesotho, and Botswana to encourage the participation of young educators in decision-making reflect a collective commitment to nurturing their active engagement:

- These Unions have instituted policies and structures that prioritise the representation of young members at various decision levels. They ensure that young educators are strongly represented in decision-making processes, symbolising their importance for the Union's future. This approach, as noted in Malawi, Senegal, and Côte d'Ivoire, emphasises the value of providing young members with a platform to have their say in important decisions.
- Union representatives commonly emphasised integrating young educators into leadership positions. Senegal, Côte d'Ivoire, Rwanda, and other countries are taking active measures to sensitise young members, encouraging them not to be afraid and equipping them with the skills needed to sustain the Union's vitality. They underscore the benefits of assuming leadership positions, allowing young educators to learn their rights and duties, further motivating them to engage in decision-making processes.
- These Unions underscore the principles of equality and meritocracy, as mentioned by representatives from Côte d'Ivoire and Benin. They ensure that no matter an individual's age, young or grown, leadership roles are granted based on merit, making young members feel valued and part of the decision-making process.
- Training and capacity-building initiatives are another hallmark of these strategies. These Unions conduct training programmes to equip young educators with essential knowledge and skills required to actively participate in decision-making. This not only prepares them for their roles but also helps them to understand the significance of their active involvement.
- These strategies highlight the active involvement of young members in decision-making through their participation in executive roles. Countries like Zimbabwe, Côte d'Ivoire, and Senegal reported that young members hold executive positions, which ensures that their voices are heard and considered in crucial decision-making processes.

4.1.2 Perceived Effectiveness

While numerous union representatives expressed optimism and pride in the effectiveness of these strategies, the responses also acknowledged the inherent challenges and nuances involved in effectively engaging young members. One of the common sentiments echoed was the imperative of grooming young leaders for the Union's future. As a representative from Rwanda aptly put it, "We are a Union that seeks to have young leaders for the future of our Union" reflecting the Unions commitment to building a pipeline of future leaders.

Nevertheless, some representatives noted challenges faced in maintaining young members' interest in syndicalism, citing previous generations' successes in addressing numerous issues. However, they underscored the importance of motivating young members to actively engage and learn from their seasoned counterparts, emphasising the pivotal role they would play in the Union's future.

The perceived effectiveness of these strategies appears promising, with sentiments echoing the vitality of grooming young leaders for the future of the Unions:

- The common message is that these strategies are critical in making young members realise their importance in shaping the Union's future. This belief that young members are indeed the future of the Unions, exemplified by sentiments from Rwanda and Malawi, serves as a compelling motivator.
- While there are challenges in maintaining young members' interest in syndicalism, as recognised in Côte d'Ivoire and Senegal, the consensus is that their active involvement is key to ensuring the Union's continuity. The success stories of attracting young members to the Union through economic activities, as mentioned by Guinea and Senegal, demonstrate the adaptability of these strategies.

4.1.3 Challenges in Involving Young Members in Decision-Making

The responses from Union representatives across various African countries underscore several challenges faced in effectively involving young members in decision-making within the Unions. When asked about these challenges, they cited various factors.

There is a noticeable generation gap, as observed in Malawi, which results in older leaders believing that young members should not always be involved in decision-making processes. This lack of inclusion of young members perpetuates their lack of interest in the Union and leads to a sense of domination by older leaders. In Senegal, young members often do not take the Union serious, believing that it has no positive effect on them. They tend to disregard the importance of the decisions made and often think they can bring better ideas to the table themselves, which can hinder their active participation.

Similarly, in Côte d'Ivoire, a significant challenge arises from the lack of enthusiasm and interest displayed by young members. They may not be as active or invested in decision-making processes as they should be. This lack of engagement can be attributed to their belief that they already possess more knowledge than their elders, which hinders their willingness to participate. Rwanda faces the challenge of motivating young members to join the Union and actively engage in decision-making processes. Even though the government offers them free educational scholarships, many young members do not see the value of joining the Union, focusing more on materialistic pursuits. In some cases, young members' decisions are perceived as immature, as pointed out by Malawi. This can result in resistance from older leaders who may question the viability of their input. The belief that they are always correct can also be a hindrance to their active involvement.

Financial constraints are another challenge, particularly in Benin, where funds are scarce and can impact the ability to effectively involve young members in decision-making. When young members see no financial incentive, their participation may decline, making it necessary to encourage them through alternative means. The lack of experience and quality training is a significant challenge faced by many Unions, as

highlighted in Ethiopia, Mali, and Côte d'Ivoire. Young members may not possess the skills necessary to make informed and wise decisions. Their reluctance to undergo training or accept guidance can hinder their effective participation in decision-making.

Fear and misconceptions are also challenges, as pointed out in Côte d'Ivoire. Young members may fear that their involvement in decision-making could impact their careers or futures negatively. Misunderstandings about the Union's purpose can further deter their participation. In Botswana, materialistic motivations can impede young members' involvement. Their focus on financial gain may overshadow their commitment to the Union's objectives. Lack of training and inexperience were identified as significant challenges in Guinea, and as one respondent noted, many young members may not understand the importance of training and gaining experience before participating in decision-making.

Finally, lack of patience and sometimes poor behaviour can pose challenges, particularly when young members may display immaturity in their communication and interactions with authority figures, as observed in Senegal.

These challenges underscore the need for targeted strategies to address the specific concerns and reservations of young members, with the ultimate goal of fostering their active involvement in decision-making processes within the Unions.

4.1.4 Success Stories - Young Members Influencing Union Decisions

These examples highlight the significant impact that young members can have when their perspectives and ideas are actively considered and integrated into the decision-making processes of Unions. Their energy, technological expertise, and innovative thinking contribute to positive changes and improvements within the organisations.

Exhibit 1 – Success Stories from Selected Countries

From Malawi

A) Young members played a pivotal role in restructuring the Union's recruitment process, particularly during the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic. Their introduction of innovative ideas involving technology and social media significantly improved the efficiency of the recruitment process. (B) Young members successfully influenced the Union's decision-making process when advocating for salary increases. Their strategic approach involved evaluating alternatives and considering the ups and downs before pursuing demonstrations, ultimately leading to a favourable outcome.

From Côte d'Ivoire

Young members influenced decisions related to demonstrations for increased salaries and rights, leveraging their enthusiasm and energy to effectively engage in protests and advocacy.

From Rwanda

Young members contributed technological support to connect rural and urban members, enhancing the Union's effectiveness.

Their efforts underscored their potential to drive positive change.

From Guinea

Young members provided valuable expertise in technical and technological know-how during recruitment activities, which influenced the Union's approach to effectively attract new members.

From Ethiopia

Young members prompted change in decision-making when older leaders initially disregarded their input. Their persistence and advocacy for change led to the introduction of new initiatives that positively impacted the Union.

From Botswana

While young members were not particularly active in the Union, open forums allowed them to share views, suggestions, and critiques. These interactions offered opportunities for participation and contributions, even if they were less active afterward.

From Senegal

A) Young members led efforts to update the recruitment methods, resulting in qualitative changes that enhanced the Union. They also successfully advocated for the official hiring of contracted teachers as national civil servants, improving career prospects and opportunities for advancement.

(B) Young members proposed technological solutions to address rural issues, resulting in fruitful changes that improved the Union's effectiveness.

© A young member advocated for an excellence reward, leading to its adoption as a national recognition awarded annually.

4.2 Research Question 2: Barriers to the Participation and Leadership of Young Members

In this analysis section, we reflect on the responses gathered through past tense interview questions that explore how Unions sought to represent the interests of young members and involve them in decision-making.

The first question revolves around the strategies and initiatives employed by Unions to represent the interests of young members. By examining the responses, we aim at understanding how these strategies were tailored to the unique needs of young educators, and we look for specific examples of projects or programmes that engaged young educators. Additionally, we consider the success metrics used to evaluate the effectiveness of these strategies.

The second question delves into the methods used to encourage young educators to participate in decision-making processes within the Union. We explore the channels provided for young members to voice their opinions, communication mechanisms for decision-making processes, and opportunities for direct interaction with Union leadership. Moreover, we seek to understand how young members' perspectives were ensured a serious consideration in decision-making.

The third question addresses challenges faced in effectively involving young members in decision-making in the past. We explore potential misconceptions, resistance from older members, communication barriers, and the measures taken to overcome these challenges by the Union.

4.2.1 Barriers Faced by Young Educators

The interviews from various countries shed light on the common challenges and barriers faced by young educators in their involvement in Education Unions. One of the recurring themes identified is the reluctance of older or senior Union members to allow young educators to actively participate. This resistance is often attributed to self-interest or the fear of losing control within the Union. A representative from Malawi stressed this concern, stating,

"The main barrier has been the fact that the old ones or the elders do not want to give the young members a part in the Union, purely driven by self-interest."

Similarly, another respondent from Senegal confirmed that *"The elders would refuse to give young people the opportunity to effectively take over."*

Another significant barrier highlighted in the interviews is the financial constraints faced by young educators. Many young members express a desire for financial incentives or remuneration to motivate their involvement in Union activities. As a Rwandan interviewee stated,

"The main obstacle has been the financial barrier,"

With the sentiment that young members often prioritise financial stability over Union participation.

Fear and lack of confidence serve as major obstacles for young educators, discouraging them from joining the Union due to concerns that their participation could jeopardise their careers. As expressed by a Malawian respondent, *They are told not to get themselves involved in the Union because they are too young to risk their careers.*

In some Regions, young members display lack of interest in Union activities, fearing that participation might negatively impact on their careers. As one Benin interviewee emphasised:

"Not every youth finds it reliable enough because they are scared of taking actions which could cost them their young career."

Another notable barrier is the absence of proper training or professional development opportunities for young educators within the Union, leaving them ill-equipped to participate effectively in decision-making processes.

4.2.2 Union Actions to Overcome Barriers

In response to these barriers, the interviews provide insights into the strategies and actions undertaken by Education Unions to empower young members. One successful approach highlighted in the interviews is the proactive involvement of young members in updating recruitment methods. As a Côte d'Ivoire respondent mentioned:

"We actually fought for contract teachers to be officially hired as national civil servants,"

providing better career prospects. Similarly, young members in Senegal have played a significant role in enhancing recruitment processes, leading to qualitative improvements within the Union.

Several Unions have implemented the appointment of youth representatives at different levels of decision-making, thus ensuring that young educators have a voice and influence within the Union. A Malawian interviewee emphasised this strategy, stating *that the Union decided to have a youth representative at every decision level of the Union.*

Acknowledging the importance of providing professional development and training opportunities to young educators, some Unions offer programmes to equip them with the necessary skills. This focus on training is essential in overcoming the lack of knowledge and confidence among young members, as noted by an Ethiopian interviewee.

To address financial concerns, Unions are developing economic activities aimed at attracting young educators to participate actively. This approach involves providing incentives such as financial rewards or income-generating opportunities.

The implementation of rules and regulations within Unions to prevent the discouragement or blocking of young members' involvement is a significant step towards breaking down barriers. These regulations can ensure a more inclusive and supportive environment for the active participation of young educators.

In some cases, Unions are working to involve family members, such as husbands, in Union activities to illustrate the benefits and importance of their wives' participation. This approach addresses social barriers and promotes gender equality within the Unions.

4.2.3 Challenges Faced by Young Educators in Union Leadership

The data concerning barriers encountered by young educators when taking on leadership roles within Unions reveals several common challenges. One recurring theme is the lack of experience among young leaders, leading to difficulties and mistakes in managing Union activities. This absence of experience can make their work more complicated and hinders their effectiveness in leadership positions. In line with this, they often resist training and over-estimate their own expertise, which in turn impacts on their professional development. This observation underscores the significance of mentorship and the need for young educators to recognise the value of learning from more experienced members. Geographical factors, particularly in rural areas such as Ethiopia and Mali, also present a unique set of challenges for young educators. Their remote locations make it difficult for them to assume leadership roles and actively participate in Union activities. Moreover, the fear of competing with more

experienced elders and the influence of administrative authorities within Unions further complicate their journey to leadership. This data highlights the complex dynamics that young educators encounter and emphasises the need for tailored solutions to address these barriers.

4.2.4 Diverse Barriers Faced by Young Educators in Union Leadership

Another prevalent issue among young educators taking up leadership roles within Unions is the lack of skills and training, which affects not only their effectiveness but their ability to appropriately address administrative issues and authorities. This deficiency in technical know-how hampers their performance in leadership roles. Additionally, gender-specific barriers, such as the sexual harassment faced by women in leadership positions, hinder their participation, pointing to the need for specific measures to address gender-related challenges.

The quotes from various Regions further emphasise the importance of training, mentorship, and the need for young educators to acknowledge the value of learning from experienced elders to overcome these barriers. These challenges are diverse and multifaceted, requiring comprehensive solutions that take into account the unique needs of young educators in different Regions. While the data provides a comprehensive view of the barriers they face, the path to addressing these challenges will require concerted efforts and support from within the Union community.

4.2.5 Efforts to Encourage Greater Involvement of Young Educators in Union Leadership

The data reveals various strategies employed by Unions to address the barriers faced by young educators when taking on leadership roles within the Union. One common approach is the provision of training and workshops to enhance the professional skills of young leaders. These training programmes help them make better decisions and improve their leadership abilities. Moreover, brochures and handouts are used to educate young educators about their rights and duties, thus enhancing their communication skills. These efforts indicate that Unions are making a conscious attempt to equip young educators with the knowledge and skills

needed to effectively take on leadership positions. The data underscores the significance of ongoing training and mentorship to build the capacity of young leaders.

Several Unions have adopted an inclusive approach, allowing young educators to occupy various leadership positions. This hands-on experience helps them develop the courage and competence required for effective leadership. Additionally, Union executives are actively encouraging young educators to accept training and recognise the value of mentorship, signalling a commitment to addressing the barriers they face. Efforts have been made to sensitise the spouses of young women involved in the Union, highlighting the importance of their involvement and how it can benefit their matrimonial life. Overall, these strategies emphasise the commitment of Unions to foster greater participation and address the challenges faced by young educators.

4.2.6 Challenges and Upcoming Strategies for Encouraging Greater Involvement

While some Unions have made significant efforts, not all have witnessed substantial improvements in young educator involvement. In some cases, young educators may resist training, believing they already possess the necessary skills. As such, continued efforts are needed to instil the importance of learning from experienced members. Some Unions are still working on developing effective strategies and have new initiatives in the pipeline. These upcoming strategies aim at overcoming the resistance to training and comprehensively addressing the barriers more comprehensively.

In conclusion, the data highlights the diverse approaches Unions employ to foster the greater involvement of young educators in leadership positions, from training and workshops to hands-on experience. However, resistance to training and the need for continued sensitisation are challenges that remain. Nevertheless, the overall trend shows a commitment to enhancing the skills and capacities of young educators to effectively lead effectively within the Union.

4.3 Research Question 3: Intersectional Barriers Among Youth

This analysis section delves into the responses from past tense interview questions related to the different barriers linked to age, geography, socio-economic status, culture, family status, and more among young members. It also explores the Union's actions in overcoming these barriers.

The first question aims at identifying unique challenges faced by young educators from diverse backgrounds, considering factors such as age, socio-economic status, and cultural differences. By analysing the responses, we aim at understanding how these challenges differ from those faced by young educators from more traditional backgrounds, seeking concrete examples and examining the intersections among these numerous factors.

The second question delves into the role of geographical factors and cultural differences in limiting the participation of young educators in specific Regions. We look for information on Regions where pronounced challenges exist, examples of how cultural norms or geographical isolation have hindered engagement, and insights into how the Union has navigated these challenges for inclusivity across diverse contexts.

The third question addresses the specific measures taken by the Union to address the barriers associated with age, socio-economic status, and cultural diversity. We seek examples of initiatives designed to cater for the needs of young educators from different backgrounds, and we examine how these measures consider the intersectionality of various barriers. Additionally, we explore instances where tailored approaches may not have been successful, and lessons learned from such experiences.

The fourth question is focused on instances where the Union's efforts have successfully created a more inclusive environment for young educators from various backgrounds. We aim at collecting anecdotes of young educators overcoming barriers and finding a strong sense of belonging within the Union. Furthermore, we look at how the impact of these efforts on young educators' overall engagement is gauged and identify ongoing challenges in ensuring a consistent and inclusive experience for young members from diverse backgrounds.

4.3.1 Challenges Faced by Educators Across Different Age Groups and Union Efforts to Overcome Them

The data offers insights into the various challenges that educators from different age groups encounter in Unions, emphasising the role of age, socio-economic factors, and cultural aspects in shaping these challenges.

Age, as a barrier, manifests in several ways. One common challenge is the reluctance of older members to yield leadership positions to younger members, driven by a resistance to change or a reluctance to embrace generational transitions. This competition for leadership roles within Unions, particularly when older members cling to power, creates friction among members. Moreover, age restrictions for defining who is considered "young" in a Union can be limiting, as it may exclude individuals above a certain age but without stable employment. This can hinder the representation of young members' interests in the Union. Age-related barriers are often compounded by external factors, such as the fear of punishment from employers for joining a Union, making it difficult for young educators to assert their rights.

Socio-economic factors also play a significant role in the challenges faced by young educators. A lack of finances and limited resources can limit the implementation of Union strategies and plans. Moreover, the lure of material benefits, such as financial gain, can lead young members to prioritise their personal financial interests over their participation in the Union, affecting their engagement and commitment. These challenges highlight the need for Unions to address socio-economic factors to encourage greater involvement.

Cultural factors represent yet another challenge. In some cases, cultural traditions and religious restrictions discourage certain members, particularly women, from getting involved in Union activities. The societal conservative mindset and customs may not grant women leadership roles or a say when men are present. Similarly, some tribal or religious norms can prevent members from participating in Union activities. Overcoming these cultural challenges requires a change in societal perceptions and a concerted effort to promote gender equality and cultural sensitivity within the Union.

While challenges abound, Unions have not been passive. They have initiated various strategies to address these issues. For instance, Unions have imposed age limits and term mandates for elders to make room for younger members. Sensitisation projects have been launched to address socio-economic challenges, promote cultural awareness, and encourage participation. Moreover, some Unions have adopted a more inclusive approach, allowing members from diverse age groups to lead. These efforts reflect the commitment of Unions to fostering greater participation and empowering young educators to effectively overcome these challenges.

4.3.2 Impact of Geographic Factors and Cultural Differences on the Participation of Young Educators

The data reveals that geographical factors and cultural differences have indeed, played significant roles in limiting the participation of young educators in various countries. These aspects have had different impacts across Regions, highlighting the diverse challenges that educators face.

In Malawi, for example, geographical factors such as rugged terrain, hills, rivers, mountains, and inadequate infrastructure make it difficult for young members, especially those in rural areas, to attend national-level meetings. Similar challenges are encountered in Ethiopia, where long distances and rural living conditions impede teachers' participation in Union activities. These issues are not limited to Africa. In Zimbabwe, lack of infrastructure in rural Regions also hinders the Union's activities.

However, there are cases where geographical factors have been mitigated. In Rwanda, where infrastructure is well developed and the country is interconnected with great roads and rail conditions, geographical limitations have been significantly reduced, enabling better participation. Moreover, technological solutions have also played a significant role. In Mali, social media and online meetings have helped members overcome geographical barriers, facilitating participation and engagement.

Cultural differences also emerge as a notable barrier. In some regions, deeply rooted beliefs and customs limit the participation of women in

Unions or other activities. For example, in Senegal, cultural differences have a role in preventing women from joining Unions, with some communities not accepting certain activities due to their beliefs. Similar cultural restrictions on women's involvement in Unions are echoed in Côte d'Ivoire and Sierra Leone. However, in some countries, there have been efforts to address these cultural differences. In Senegal, a department dedicated to inclusivity, gender, and equality has been established, actively organising various activities, including workshops. These initiatives aim at promoting inclusivity and bridging the gaps created by cultural differences, allowing for more diverse and equitable participation.

Exhibit 2: Voices of Young Teachers Concerning Cultural Differences

1. "The government needs to improve the situation." - **MALAWI**, *highlighting the need for government intervention to address geographical challenges.*
2. "Africa has its culture, and that will definitely bring some cultural situations that are not easy to deal with." – **Côte d'Ivoire** *acknowledging the influence of cultural differences on participation.*
3. "Social media has reduced this major issue we used to face in the past." - **MALI**, *emphasising the role of technology in overcoming geographical barriers.*
1. "With more infrastructure and finances, a lot of issues will be solved." - **ZIMBABWE**, *pointing out the potential solutions to geographical challenges.*
2. "We have dedicated a department that even deals with inclusivity, gender, and equality." - **SENEGAL**, *illustrating efforts to address cultural differences and promote inclusivity.*

4.3.3 Promoting Inclusivity among Young Educators

In countries, such as Malawi and Senegal, Unions emphasise financial inclusivity by addressing the challenges faced by young educators, particularly those who are financially constrained. These Unions work to ensure that geographical factors, such as the remoteness of rural areas, do not act as a barrier to participation. The success stories emphasise that inclusivity, extends to gender and disability, with all members actively engaged in Union events and activities. Côte d'Ivoire serves as an example of the strength in unity, as they rally together during demonstrations to claim their rights. The message is clear: When everyone works together, regardless of age, gender, or other demographics, they can advocate for their rights effectively and inclusively.

The commitment to inclusivity extends to Rwanda, where every member is welcome at all Union levels, from national congress to local events. In Ethiopia, gender and disability inclusivity is highly regarded, emphasising the strength of unity. Mali focuses on creating space where all members can feel free and engaged, irrespective of their backgrounds. Sierra Leone underscores the importance of total inclusion during their events, emphasising that inclusivity is an essential part of their Organisation. These initiatives emphasise that when inclusivity is prioritised, it leads to better understanding and successful outcomes. They serve as inspiring examples for other educators' Unions to follow, promoting unity and shared accomplishments.

4.4 Research Question 4: Union level Challenges

This analysis section focuses on understanding the barriers faced by young educators at various levels of Unions, including the local, regional, and national levels. It also explores how these barriers can be overcome.

The first question seeks to highlight differences in participation barriers experienced by young educators at different levels of the Union. It aims at identifying unique factors contributing to these barriers at each level and examines whether these barriers primarily stem from the nature of activities or structural differences. The impact of these barriers on young educators' progression through different levels of involvement is also of interest.

The second question delves into specific challenges that may be more prevalent at one level compared to others. It explores how differences in leadership styles or expectations contribute to variations in challenges, and whether there are instances where young educators face fewer barriers at certain levels. Examples of how young educators have successfully overcome challenges at specific levels are also sought.

The third question investigates the consistency of strategies employed to address these barriers across all levels of the Union. It explores the balance between the need for consistent strategies and the necessity to adapt to different levels' unique dynamics. Instances where strategies were modified to suit the challenges faced at a specific level are explored,

along with considerations to ensure that adjustments made at one level do not inadvertently create new barriers at another.

The fourth question seeks instances where the Union's approach effectively addressed barriers at a particular level. Lessons learned from successfully addressing challenges at one level that can be applied to others are examined. Furthermore, the long-term impact of these approaches on young educators' overall engagement is assessed, along with factors contributing to the scalability of strategies from one level to another within the Union.

4.4.1 Differential Participation Barriers Across Union Levels

At the local level, common barriers include financial constraints, difficulty in accessing events due to rough roads and challenging geographical conditions. In places like Malawi, efforts are made to involve the government in partnership to address these financial and infrastructural issues. Senegal notes that lack of communication and distance can hinder local participation. To address these, funding for technological approaches to keep locals informed is suggested. Côte d'Ivoire points out that autonomy at each level is well-defined, reducing variations in participation barriers. Rwanda underlines that financial challenges affect all levels, but the inability of young members in rural zones to attend meetings stands out.

On the regional and national levels, many young educators seem to face fewer participation barriers, although financial challenges persist. Benin highlights a significant gap in resources between local and national/regional levels. Ethiopia notes procedural barriers that young educators must overcome to engage at the national level. Similarly, Mali points out that the local level is more influenced by external factors, while regional and national levels have more resilience. Côte d'Ivoire raises the issue of language barriers on the regional level. In Senegal, financial barriers persist across levels, with a call for decentralisation to enhance infrastructure and training. Zimbabwe faces financial issues at both local and national levels, with government and financial partner support suggested to mitigate these barriers. Sierra Leone encounters more

significant cultural and traditional barriers at the local level, while leadership issues are identified at the urban level. Sensitisation and more open camps for training are proposed solutions. Lesotho faces significant issues at the local level due to geographical remoteness and financial constraints.

4.4.2 Differential Challenges Across Union Levels

At the local level, one prominent challenge is the reluctance of elder members to cede responsibilities to the younger generation. In Malawi, there is a call for trust in younger members for more substantial roles within the local Union, highlighting a need for generational transition in leadership. Senegal emphasises that the local level faces challenges due to limited experience and training, which impacts on effectiveness. The need for solutions to empower local-level participants is stressed. Côte d'Ivoire points out that young educators are increasingly not interested in syndicalism activities, particularly at the local level. The older generation is urged to remain active and engaged to prevent the decline in participation. Employer resistance poses a specific challenge, especially at the local level, as noted in Rwanda. Young teachers often fear attending meetings due to job security concerns, necessitating a call for employer cooperation.

At the national level, Malawi identifies a prevalent political challenge. Government influence can hinder decision-making processes, and leaders' interests sometimes align with specific political parties. Benin highlights the issue of lack of experience, particularly a belief among some younger members that they know everything and do not need training. Encouraging their active engagement is deemed crucial. Ethiopia underlines that experienced teachers at the local level tend to exert dominance, creating a more pronounced challenge. Reducing self-interest is deemed essential to tackle this issue. Mali identifies a challenge concerning women's participation in the Union, noting that some husbands inhibit their involvement due to jealousy.

Initiatives to involve husbands in Union activities are suggested. Côte d'Ivoire finds language barriers more pronounced at the regional level,

affecting the involvement of young members, particularly those living far from towns. It can hinder information sharing. Across the levels, Senegal underscores the importance of teacher training to bridge the significant gap and improve infrastructure, advocating for government support to address these issues.

At the local level, financial constraints and infrastructure challenges remain paramount. The lack of finances prevents effective participation and attendance of Union activities. Zimbabwe predominantly faces financial barriers at the local level, where members often struggle with mobility due to financial constraints. A similar sentiment is expressed in Botswana, which argues for the necessity of better infrastructure and financial support at the local level. Guinea, on the other hand, views the challenges as mostly consistent across all levels, emphasising the importance of encouraging young members, especially those in the rural areas.

4.4.3 Strategies Employed to Address Barriers in Young Educators' Unions Across Different Levels

In the pursuit of addressing barriers faced by young educators within Unions at local, regional, and national levels, insights from diverse countries shed light on the consistency and adaptability of strategies. *Malawi*, for instance, acknowledges that the effectiveness of strategies varies depending on the specific barriers at each level, recognising that these barriers can be overcome when the government really works hand in hand with them. Meanwhile, *Senegal* underscores the need for strategies that are both consistent and adaptable, noting that They have somehow been consistent even though there is a need to contextualise according to the issues and problems and the environment. It's within this duality of consistency and adaptability that the complexities of strategy emerge.

In Côte d'Ivoire, strategies are seen as consistent to some extent, but limitations persist due to financial constraints and waning interest among young educators, it is noted that strategies could have been more consistent and effective across levels if the financial situation were somehow better.

The case of *Rwanda* emphasises the necessity of tailoring strategies, as they point out that not all have been consistent, but they are seriously working on how best to implement new strategies to solve these upcoming situations they are facing right now.

While striving for consistency, these accounts from different nations illustrate that the varied and evolving nature of barriers may require equally adaptable strategies to ensure young educators' voices are heard and valued across all levels of their Unions.

4.4.4 Instances of Effective Union Approaches in Addressing Barriers

Efforts to tackle the challenges facing young educators within Unions across different levels have yielded significant achievements. In Malawi, they developed a representative structure at the local level to ensure that young educators are included in the decision-making process at the national level, emphasising that no one should be underestimated, especially the young ones. Similarly, in *Senegal*, the adoption of virtual meetings and online communication has made participation more accessible. They indicated that the virtual meetings had helped them in addressing this issue and helped in identifying many situations at the local level.

In *Côte d'Ivoire* the Union successfully advocated for improved indemnity for correcting national examination papers and enhanced promotion prospects. The *Rwandan* Union fought for an increase in the national recruitment level, emphasising the significance of uniting to ensure young educators understand the importance of Union participation, pointing out that together they can always reach the pinnacle. The Union in *Mali* achieved wage and salary increment through social dialogue and concertation. It was noted that there is strength in the Union. In these instances, Union strategies have effectively addressed barriers and promoted the engagement of young educators across various levels.

5 Quantitative Analysis and Results

The survey employed the use of *purposive sampling* where a total of one thousand two hundred and nine (1,209) educators responded to the survey. Respondents were supposed to answer a total of twenty-two (22) questions promptly. The analysis was done using MS excel and results were calculated in terms of percentages just as they will be depicted below.

1. In my country, educators rights are undermined due to unfavourable political and Trades Unions climate

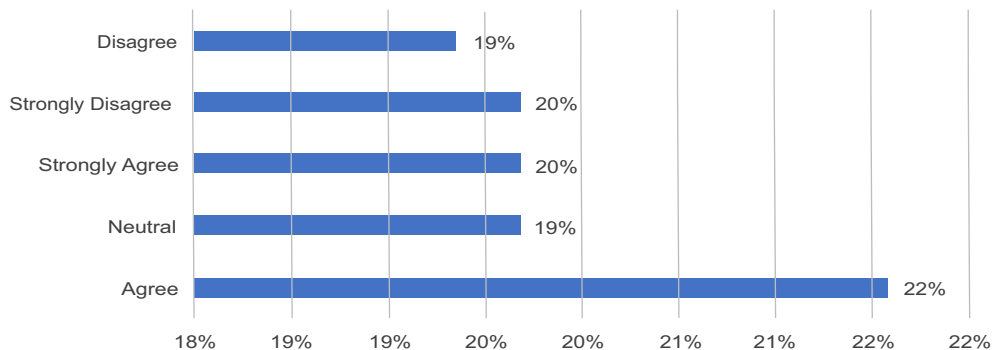


Figure 1

From figure 1, 22% of the respondents agree that unfavourable political and Trades Unions climate is a causal factor for undermining educators' rights in their respective countries. Only 19% disagreed to that fact.

2. The lack of capacity of Teacher Trades Unions to defend education and members' rights is a problem in my country.

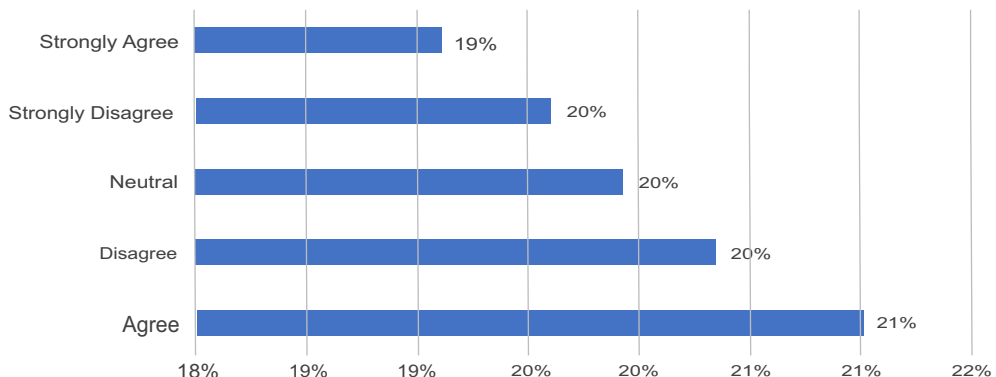


Figure 2

depicts that 40% of survey respondents either agree or strongly agree that educators' Union lack capacity to defend member rights in their countries while only 40% either disagree or strongly disagree that teachers' Union lack capacity to defend member rights. Only 20% of the remained neutral.

3. Have restrictive labour laws or government actions in your country impacted on your participation in the Union?

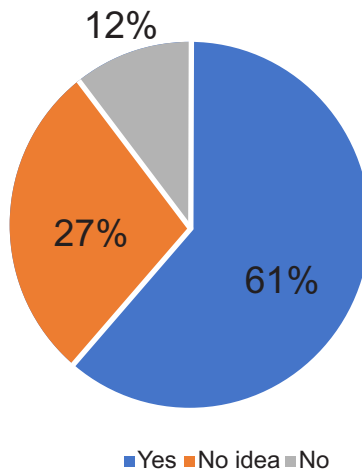


Figure 3

61% of the respondents have limited participation in Unions due to restrictive labour laws or government actions. Only 27% of the respondents had no idea of the question leaving behind 12% who responded "Yes" in the third question.

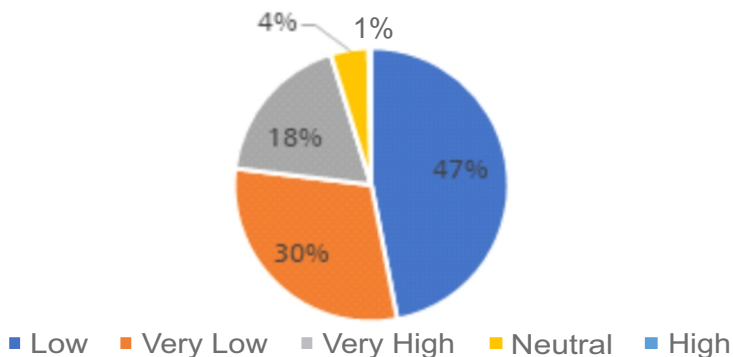


Figure 4

(47% ~ high + 18% ~ very high) 65% of the respondents rated either have high or very high capacity to defend Education workers' rights in their countries.

5. Have you faced any barriers in getting involved in Union activities? (Check all that apply)

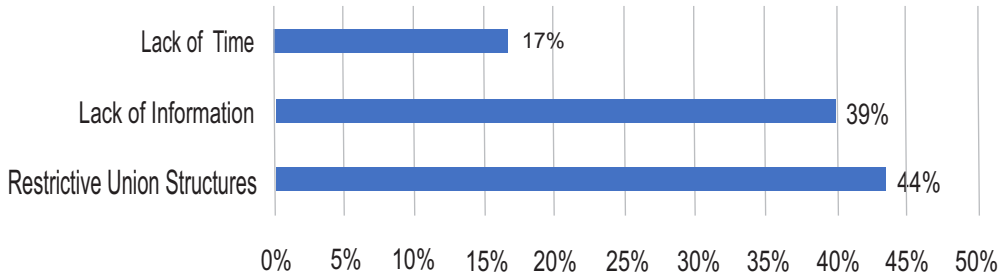


Figure 5

Restrictive Union structures have made up 44% of the barriers that restrict young educators' involvement in Union activities.

6. How effective do you think the Union's efforts have been in overcoming barriers for young educators' involvement?

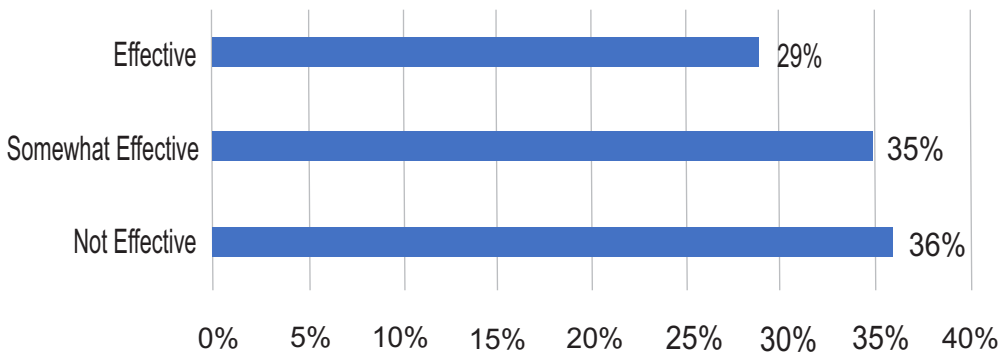


Figure 6

36% of the respondents believe that Unions efforts have not been effective in overcoming barriers for young educators' involvement while 29% responded that Unions have been effective to overcome barriers.

7. How effective do you think Unions are in influencing Education and workers welfare?

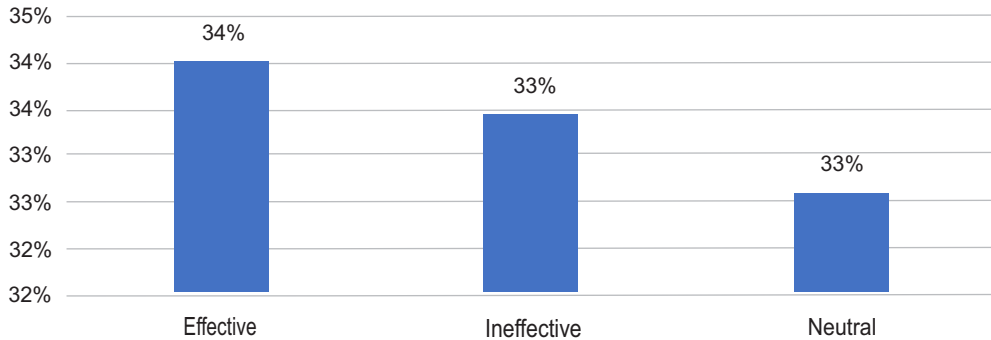


Figure 7

34% of the respondents think that Unions are effective in influencing Education and workers welfare the rest were either in effective or neutral.

8. Are you aware of the Africa Young Educators Network (AYEN)?

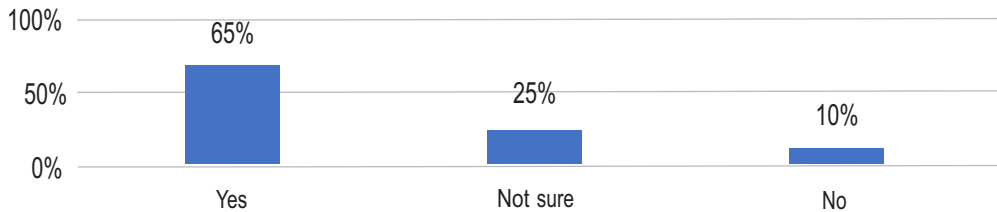


Figure 8

65% are aware of the AYEN while 10% are not aware of the AYEN. 25% are not sure that they are aware of AYEN.

9. Have you participated in any union activities or structures as a young educator?



Figure 9

51% of the respondents have participated in Union activities as a young educator.

10. How effective do you think the Union's efforts have been in overcoming barriers to young educators' involvement?

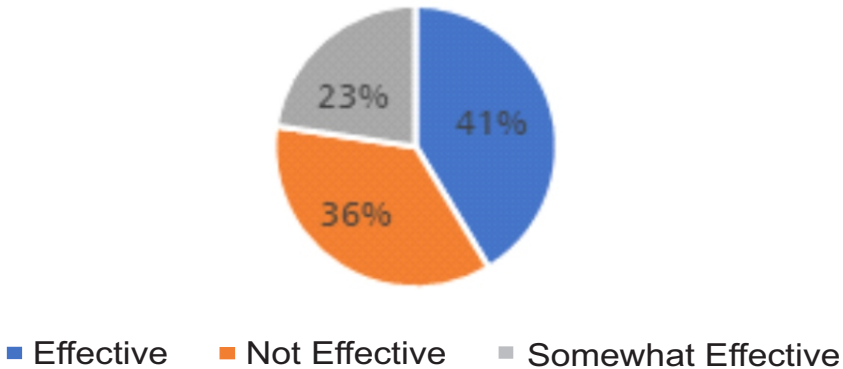


Figure 10

41% of the respondents believe that Unions have been making effective efforts to overcome barriers to educators' involvement.

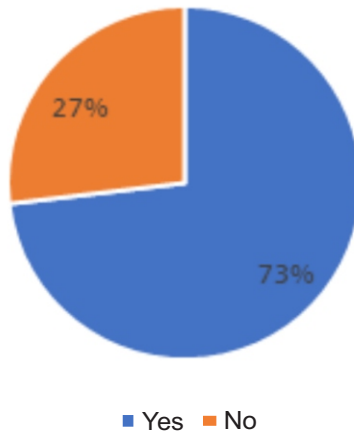


Figure 11

73% of the respondents have spotted age as a barrier to young educators to participate in Union activities.

11. Have you experienced barriers due to Geographical factors?

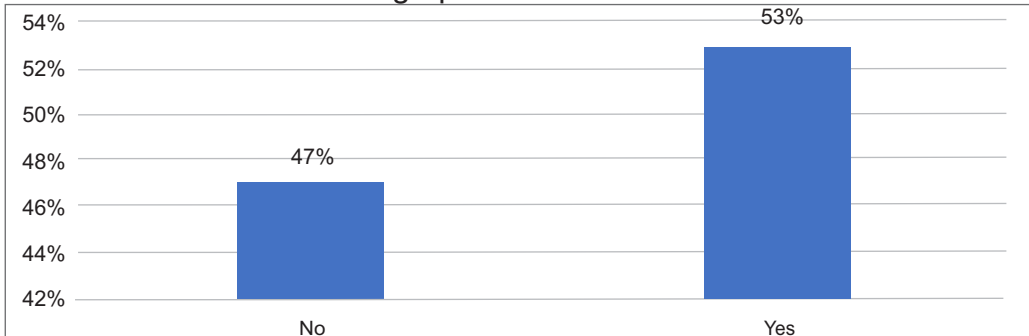


Figure 12

More than a half of the respondents have identified geographical factors as a barrier towards participation in Union activities.

11. Have you experienced barriers due to Socio-economic status?

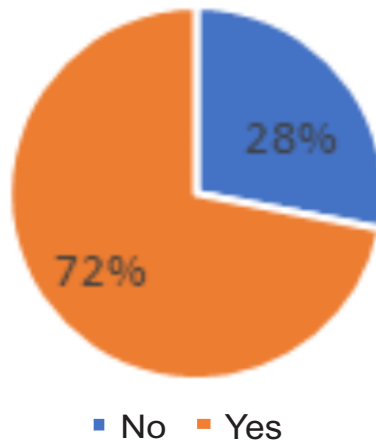


Figure 13

72% have experienced socio-economic status as a barrier in participation in Union activities while 28% have not identified socio economic status as a barrier to Union activities.

11. Have you experienced barriers due to family Status?

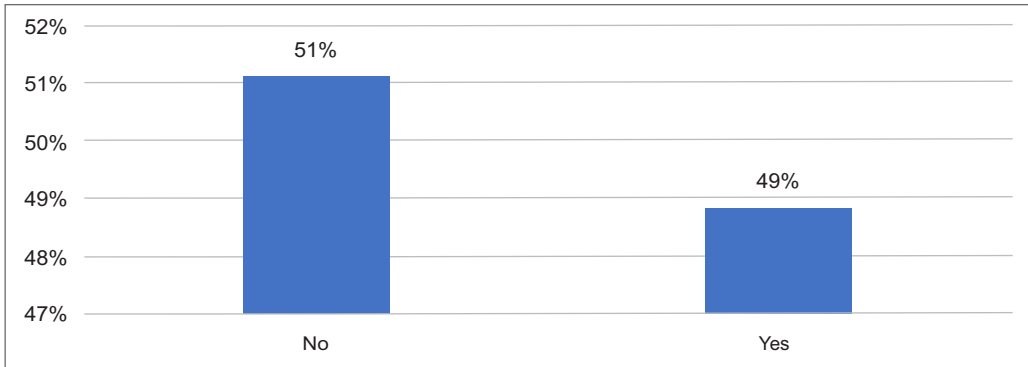


Figure 14

Family status has not been a barrier to the participation in Union activities. Only 49% of the respondents have experienced family status barriers.

11. Have you experienced barriers due to Culture?

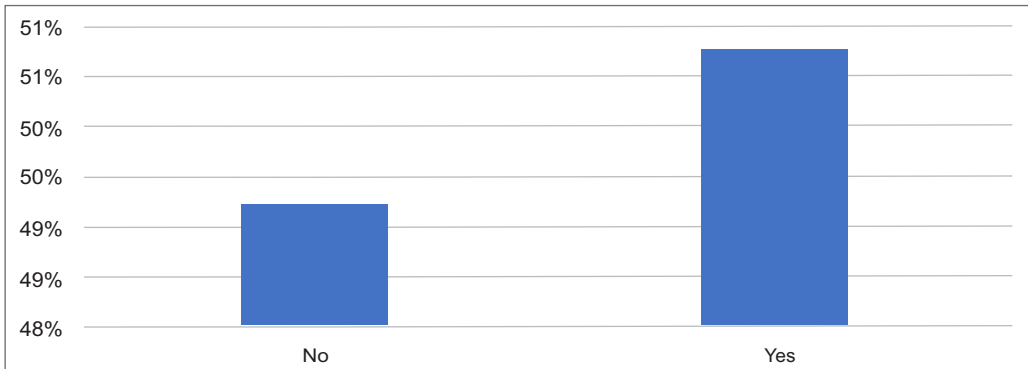


Figure 15

51% have experienced cultural barriers to Union activities. Only 49% have not experienced cultural barriers.

12. How inclusive do you find the Union structures at different levels?

■ Inclusive ■ Not Inclusive ■ Somewhat Inclusive

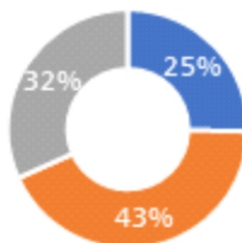


Figure 16

43% of the respondents have spotted non inclusivity in the Union structures while 25% have spotted inclusivity within Union structures at different levels.

13. Are there existing policies or actions aimed at increasing young members participation in Union activities?

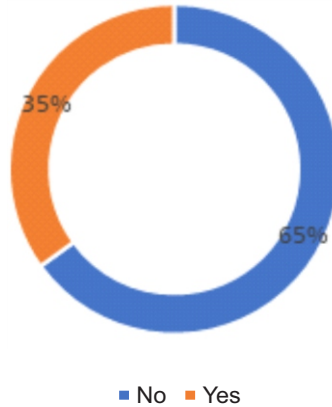
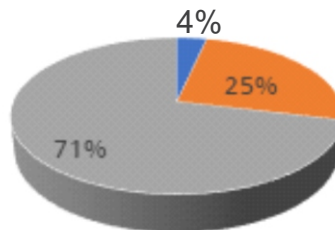


Figure 17

65% responded that there are existing policies and actions to increase young members participation in Union activities.

14. What additional steps do you think Unions can take to enhance the involvement of young members? (Check all that apply)



- Clearer Communication
- More Leadership Opportunities
- Special Programs (budget) for Young Educators

Figure 18

71% believe that special programmes for young educators are important to enhance the involvement of young members. 25% need more leadership positions and 3% have spotted clear communication to enhance involvement.

15. Would you be interested in taking a leadership role within the Union in the future?

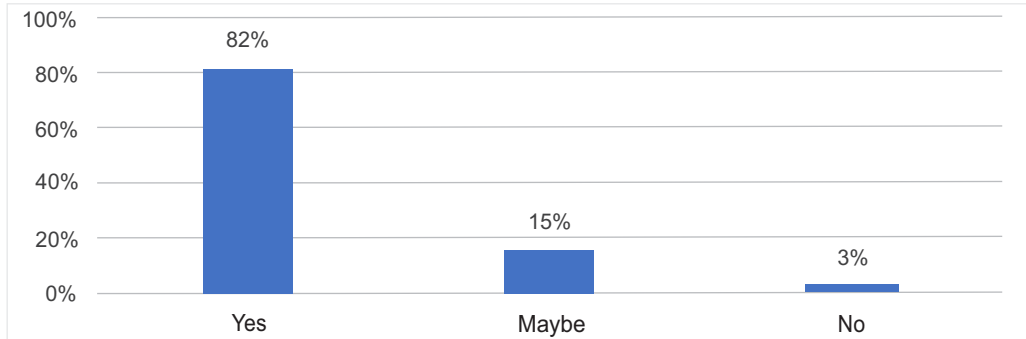


Figure 19

82% of the responses are interested in taking leadership positions with the Unions. Only 3% were not interested in taking leadership positions.

16. Age

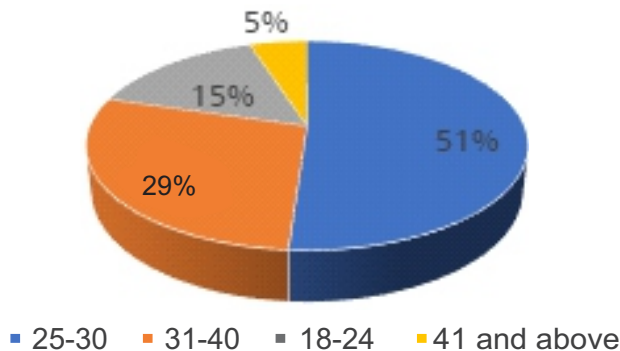


Figure 20

51% of the respondents were between 25 and 30 years making it more than a half of the total respondents. Respondents with 41 years and above, made up 5% of the responses.

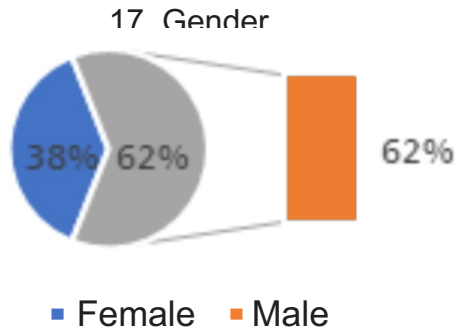


Figure 21

62% of the respondents were male while 38% of the respondents were female.

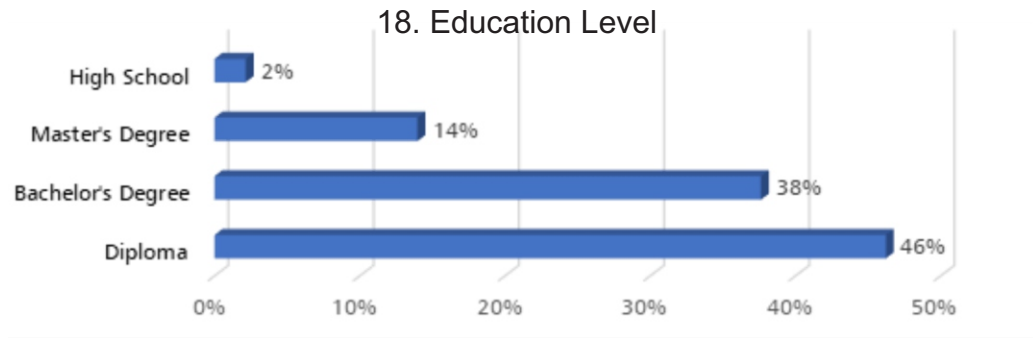


Figure 22

Education wise 46% of the survey respondents have a diploma making it the highest number of responses. Only 2% of the respondents have high school education.

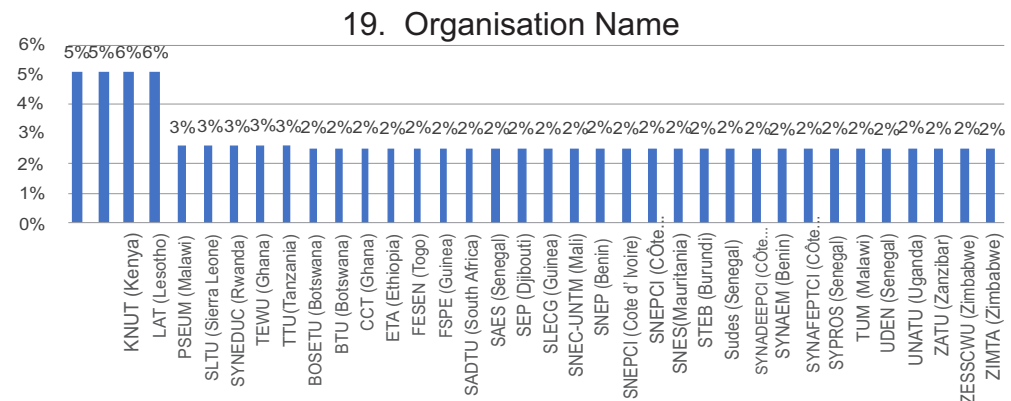


Figure 23

In terms of specific Trades Unions, GTU, KNUT, KUPPET, LAT had the largest number of respondents making 2% each. The rest of the Unions either had 3% or 2%.

20. Years of Membership in the Union

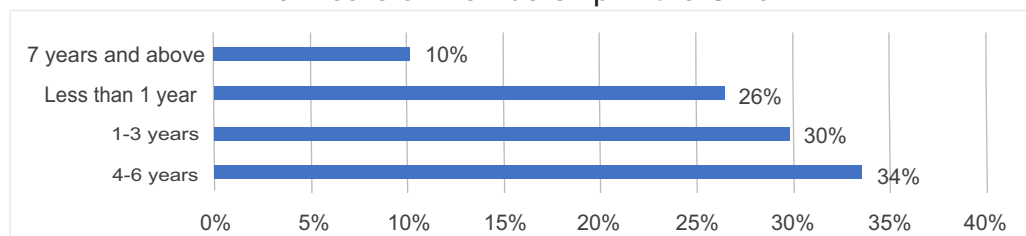


Figure 24

34% of respondents have an experience between 4 and 6 years in the Union. Only 10% have been members in the Unions for over 7 years. 26% have been members for less than 1 year and 30% have experience between 1 and 3 years.

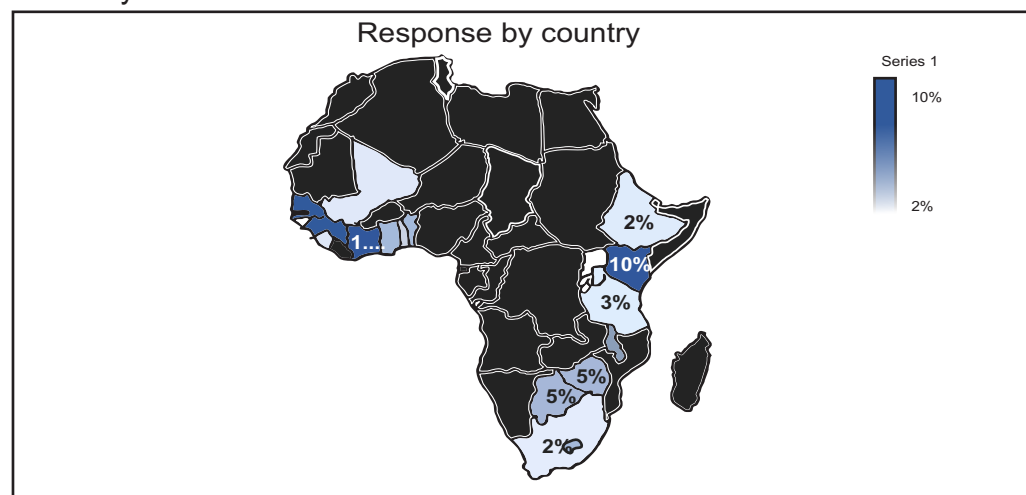


Figure 25

A total of 23 countries responded to the survey. Kenya, Cote d'Ivoire, and Senegal had the highest number of respondents of 10% each. Burundi, Djibouti, Ethiopia, Mali, Mauritania, South Africa, Togo, Uganda, Zanzibar had the least number of respondents of 2% each. The rest of the countries ranged between 3% and 5% as shown in Table 1 below.

Table 1

Country	Percentages
Kenya	10%
Côte d'Ivoire	10%
Senegal	10%
The Gambia	5%
Ghana	5%
Lesotho	5%
Malawi	5%
Benin	5%
Botswana	5%
Guinea	5%
Zimbabwe	5%
Rwanda	3%
Sierra Leone	3%
Tanzania	3%
Burundi	3%
Djibouti	3%
Ethiopia	3%
Mali	2%
Mauritania	2%
South Africa	2%
Togo	2%
Uganda	2%
Zanzibar	2%

6. Recommendations

The recommendations proposed focus on cultivating intergenerational dialogue, providing financial empowerment, augmenting skills, and seamlessly integrating technology. The overarching goal is to mitigate generational disparities, nurture a supportive environment, and strengthen the Union as a dynamic and inclusive entity for educators across various age groups.

Grounded in principles of mentorship, financial incentives, and targeted communication methods, these recommendations aim at bolstering the Union's pivotal role as a facilitator, equipping young educators with the necessary tools and opportunities for meaningful contributions to both the Union's overarching objectives and their individual professional development.

1. Establish platforms for inter-generational dialogue and knowledge-sharing to bridge the gap between older and younger Union members.
2. Explore diverse funding sources to address financial constraints, ensuring active participation of young members, and establish financial incentive programmes to recognise and reward their engagement.
3. Develop targeted communication strategies to dispel misconceptions among young members about the impact of Union involvement on their careers. Conduct awareness campaigns emphasising the crucial role of Unions in shaping a better future.
4. Strengthen training programmes to equip young members with essential skills, focusing on areas, such as decision-making, negotiation, and effective communication. Emphasise the value of continuous learning and professional development.
5. Advocate for the institutionalisation of youth representation in decision-making processes, encouraging Unions to involve young members in executive positions to ensure their voices are heard.

6. Leverage technology to facilitate active participation through virtual meetings, discussions, and feedback. Encourage the integration of technological solutions proposed by young members to effectively address Union challenges.
7. Foster a culture within Unions that values diversity, inclusivity, and equal opportunities for all members, regardless of age. Actively seek feedback from young members and integrate their perspectives into decision-making processes.
8. Establish mentorship programmes within Unions to facilitate knowledge transfer from experienced members to young educators, addressing the lack of experience and over-estimation of expertise.
9. Explore innovative funding mechanisms to alleviate financial constraints, such as providing stipends, grants, or other forms of financial support to encourage active participation.
10. Develop targeted communication campaigns to dispel misconceptions and fears, emphasising the positive impact on Union involvement in careers and fostering a sense of confidence among young educators.
11. Expand and enhance professional development programmes, including training sessions and workshops, to equip young educators with the necessary skills and knowledge for effective participation in decision-making.
12. Ensure inclusivity in decision-making by appointing youth representatives at various levels, providing a dedicated platform for young educators to voice their opinions and influence Union decisions.
13. Implement economic activities aimed at attracting young educators, offering financial incentives or income-generating opportunities to enhance their motivation for active participation.
14. Develop and enforce rules and regulations within Unions that

prevent the discouragement or blocking of young members' involvement, fostering a more inclusive and supportive environment.

15. Encourage the involvement of family members, such as spouses, in Union activities to illustrate the benefits and importance of young educators' participation, addressing social barriers and promoting gender equality.
16. Tailor solutions to address unique challenges faced by young educators in rural areas, including geographical factors that may hinder their active participation in Union activities and leadership roles.
17. Implement continuous sensitisation programmes to educate young educators about the importance of ongoing training, acknowledging the value of learning from experienced members, and overcoming resistance to training initiatives.
18. Continue providing inclusive leadership opportunities for young educators, allowing them to gain hands-on experience and develop the courage and competence required for effective leadership roles.
19. Implement gender-specific measures to address challenges faced by women in leadership positions, such as sexual harassment, ensuring a supportive and inclusive environment for all.
20. Regularly assess the impact of strategies aimed at overcoming barriers, adapting approaches based on lessons learned and evolving challenges. Encourage ongoing dialogue within Unions to identify emerging barriers and collaboratively develop innovative solutions for sustained inclusivity.

Appendix 1

Questionnaire

Dear Participant,

Thank you for participating in this research. Your insights and experiences are invaluable in shedding light on the barriers and opportunities young educators face in participating in Education Unions and leadership activities.

Relevance of the Research: This research aims at understanding the challenges young educators encounter when engaging with Education Unions and leadership roles. By participating, you contribute to shaping the future of Education Union policies, fostering an inclusive environment, and empowering the voices of young educators like yourself.

Ethical Considerations: Your participation in this interview is entirely voluntary, and you have the right to withdraw at any time without any negative consequences. Your insights will be used for research purposes only and will be treated with the utmost confidentiality. Your identity and personal information will be safeguarded throughout the research process.

Anonymity: To ensure your privacy, your individual responses and identity will remain confidential. Your insights will be combined with those of other participants, and your name will not be associated with any specific response or quote.

Best Practices: To ensure the quality and depth of our research, we kindly request that you consider the following best practices during the interview:

- Share your honest thoughts and experiences, as they will contribute to a richer understanding of the topic.
- Feel free to provide examples or anecdotes that illustrate your points.

- If any question makes you uncomfortable, please feel free to skip them and let us know.

Informed Consent: By continuing with this interview, you acknowledge that you have read and understood the information provided. You agree to participate in this research voluntarily and grant your consent for your insights to be used for research purposes.

Contact Information: If you have any questions, concerns, or would like further information about the research, please feel free to contact the research team at alexius.nkosi@gmail.com

Thank you once again for contributing your expertise to this research. Your input is immensely valuable, and we greatly appreciate your time and insights.

Section A: State of the Trades Unions' Movement

Union's Influence on Educator Rights

Please rate the extent to which you agree with the following statements:

1. Educators' rights are undermined due to unfavourable political and Trades Unions climate.
 - Strongly Disagree / Disagree / Neutral / Agree / Strongly Agree
2. The lack of capacity of Teacher Trades Unions to defend Education and members' rights is a problem.
 - Strongly Disagree / Disagree / Neutral / Agree / Strongly Agree

Impact of External Factors

3. Have restrictive labour laws or government actions impacted on your participation in the Union?
 - Yes / No / No idea

Union Capacity and Defending Rights

4. How do you rate the capacity of your Teacher Trades Unions to

defend education and your rights?

- Very Low / Low / Neutral / High / Very High

Barriers to Involvement

5. Have you faced any barriers in getting involved in Union activities?
(Check all that apply)

- Lack of Time
- Lack of Information
- Restrictive Union Structures
- None of the Above

Union Effectiveness Perception

6. How effective do you think Unions are influencing Education and worker welfare?

- Ineffective / Neutral / Effective

Section B: Challenges of Education

Attainability of Quality Education

7. Do you believe achieving quality education for all is possible in your Region? - Possible / Not Possible

Impact of COVID-19

8. To what extent has the COVID-19 pandemic disrupted education in your Region?

- Significantly Disrupted / Somewhat Disrupted / Minimally Disrupted / Not Disrupted

Access to Education During the Pandemic

9. Were you able to access quality education during the pandemic?

- Yes / No

Section C: Education International's Efforts and Union Renewal

Awareness of AYEN

10. Are you aware of the Africa Young Educators Network (AYEN)? -
Yes / No / Not sure

Participation in Union Activities

11. Have you participated in any Union activities or structures as a young educator?
- Yes / No

Barriers to Participation

12. Have you experienced any barriers to young educators' participation in Union activities?
- Yes / No

Suggestions for Enhancement

13. How effective do you think the Union's efforts have been in overcoming barriers to young educators' involvement?
- Not Effective / Somewhat Effective / Effective

Section D: Barriers and Inclusion

Barriers Based on Diversity

14. Have you experienced barriers due to age? - Yes / No
15. Have you experienced barriers due to geography? - Yes / No
16. Have you experienced barriers due to socio-economic status? –
Yes/No

17. Have you experienced barriers due to culture? - Yes / No

18. Have you experienced barriers due to family status? - Yes / No

Inclusivity of Union Structures

19. How inclusive do you find the Union structures at different levels?

- Not Inclusive / Somewhat Inclusive / Inclusive

Section E: Future Involvement and Recommendations

Existence of Policies/Actions

20. Are there existing policies or actions aimed at increasing young members' participation in Union activities? - Yes / No

Suggestions for Enhanced Involvement

21. What additional steps do you think Unions can take to enhance the involvement of young members? (Check all that apply)

- More Leadership Opportunities
- Special Programmes for Young Educators
- Clearer Communication
- Other (please specify): _____

Interest in Leadership Roles

22. Would you be interested in taking a leadership role within the Union in the future?

- Yes / No / Maybe

Section F: Research Methodology

Awareness of Previous Research

23. Are you aware of any previous research on barriers to young educators' participation in Unions? - Yes / No / Not sure

Section G: Demographic Information

1. Age:

- Under 18
- 18-24
- 25-30
- 31-40
- 41 and above

2. Gender:

- Male
- Female
- Non-binary
- Prefer not to say

3. Region: [To be discussed with EI Africa]

- Region A
- Region B
- Region C
- Region D

4. Education Level:

- High School
- Bachelor's Degree

- Master's Degree
- Doctoral Degree
- Other

5. Union Affiliation:

- Yes
- No

6. Years of Membership in the Union:

- Less than 1 year
- 1-3 years
- 4-6 years
- 7 years and above



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