

URUNANA rw'abarezi



ISSUE 07 November 2018



Why Collaboration
in education is key to
successful schools?



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Urunana rw'Abarezi is free of charge and is published on
a quarterly basis. It is also available for download online:
<https://rwanda.vvob.be/publications>

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FOREWORD



Dear Reader,

Welcome to the 7th issue of Urunana rw'abarezi, our peer learning magazine for school leaders and teachers. This year, together with our development partners in the education sector, we carried out three termly Quality Education Enhancement Awareness Campaigns across the country. During the campaign we found that some schools still need to improve their teaching and learning practices. Other schools are doing a great job, and we believe that they would serve as a model.

Various factors contribute to achieving high quality education. Collaboration within and outside the school community remains the foundation for success. A collaborative culture allows school leaders, students and parents to set the vision and mission for their school as a team and work towards achieving common goals. Through collaboration, schools also share best practices, lessons learnt, and address identified challenges.

Urunana rw'abarezi magazine serves as a platform for sharing their experiences and good practices, discuss challenges, and model solutions to continue promoting quality basic education with the focus on advancing the implementation of the Competence Based Curriculum.

Having effective school leaders, capable teachers and ensuring effective collaboration will eventually

enable all students to gain the skills and competencies they need to succeed in school, work and life. In this regard, VVOB in partnership with Rwanda Education Board and the University of Rwanda - College of Education work to achieve “Leading, Teaching and Learning Together- Umusemburo w'Ireme ry'Uburezi” (2017-2021) — advancing the implementation of the Competence-Based Curriculum through School Leadership and Induction of New Teachers.

The seventh issue of Urunana rw'abarezi magazine is themed “why collaboration in education is key to successful schools?”. It is obvious that school performance and productivity do not come from individual endeavor and attitude, rather it is a result of joint effort by all education stakeholders.

This edition of our peer learning magazine reminds us of the crucial role that collaboration plays in making schools successful. The stories shared here highlight good practices, lessons learnt and tips on how to deal with challenges in order to collaboratively improve teaching and learning.

We are confident that you will enjoy reading this magazine, and that you will contribute to this platform by sharing your experiences and good practices to collaboratively enhance the quality of education in Rwanda.

We also wish to acknowledge the hard work and continued support of VVOB and partners in promoting quality education in Rwanda.

Dr. Ndayambaje Irénée
Director General
Rwanda Education Board





COLLABORATION: a priority in the Rwandan Education System

By Eugène Rukeba

Director of School Leadership and Management Unit, REB

The education bottom-line is student academic success. To ensure that all students in Rwandan schools learn at higher levels, we have to build the professional capacity of educators (education leaders, teachers, parents and educators at other levels of the education system.) The aspiration of the school leadership and management unit is to have effective educators in every Rwandan school, who are capable of supporting students under their tutorage to succeed. “High education system performance requires every child to succeed.” Sir Michael Baber, 2007.

Reality in Rwandan schools shows that there are schools led and managed by effective educators. In such schools, student learning success is consistently high. On the other hand, there are schools in Rwanda led and managed by ineffective educators. In such schools, low student learning achievement is widespread. Yet the national aspiration regarding student learning success is success of every student in school, regardless of circumstances. Therefore, as professional educators we have a collective responsibility to not only ensure that every student in school succeeds but also that every school has a capable leader and every class has a capable teacher.

Collective responsibility means that all educators, irrespective of the school they teach in, share a commitment for the success of every student in not only their school, but also in every other school in Rwanda (some educators with an international rather than a parochial outlook would say in “the world”). This is because of their deep understanding and thinking that the effects of well educated or badly educated people go beyond the individuals themselves. Their parents, immediate families and communities and even communities in other countries are implicated.

However, the quality of student learning cannot exceed the quality of educators. For every student in school to succeed, every school must, out of necessity, have capable educators. In this regard, collective responsibility means that Rwandan educators, irrespective of the school they teach in, should not allow a single educator (education leader or teacher in their school, sector, district, country...) to fail their responsibility of supporting and ensuring the success of every student, irrespective of school or socio-economic status. One way these educators can achieve this goal, is through mutual support, collaborative learning and collaborative problem identification and solving.

Why is collaboration one of Rwanda Education Board's priorities?

To answer this question, I have

reproduced the answer provided by Dufour:

“To those who ask the question: Why Professional Learning Communities (another name for collaborative teams)? I would ask: why not? What else is out there that has such universal consensus in terms of its power to make a difference in the lives of students? There has never been greater consensus about what is required of educators to improve student learning in schools.”

Besides being a best practice for most world class education systems, “collaborative learning [and problem solving] is more effective than professional development workshops, even the best ones” (Fullan, 2014). It is cost effective too.

What does literature say about collaboration?

“Why is it so important to organize staff into collaborative teams rather than continue the long-standing tradition of teacher isolation? ‘Interdependence is what organizations are all about. Productivity, performance, and innovation result from joint action, not just individual efforts and behaviour’.” (Pfeffer & Sutton, 2000)

“Capacity building is not just workshops and professional development for all. It is the daily habit of working together, and you can't learn this from a workshop or course. You need to learn it by doing it and having a



mechanism for getting better at it on purpose. Collaborative learning cultures are the most effective approach to building the capacity of educators and improving student learning, because they embed all three components: day-to-day learning, performance appraisal, and integrated professional development. This is professional capital at its finest.” (Fullan, 2014)

Which recommendations do they provide for effective collaboration at school level?

DuFour, R. , DuFour R., Eaker, R. & Many T. (2006)ⁱ :

“Collaboration does not lead to improved results unless people are focused on the right issues. A Professional Learning Community is composed of collaborative teams who work interdependently to achieve common goals linked to the purpose of learning. The goal is not simply to learn a new strategy, but instead to create conditions for perpetual learning – an

“A group of staff members who are determined to work together will find a way.”

environment in which innovation and experimentation are viewed not as tasks to be accomplished or projects to be completed but as ways of conducting day-to-day business, forever.”

“The fact that teachers collaborate will do nothing to improve a school. The purpose of collaboration can only be accomplished if the professionals

engaged in collaboration are focused on the right things.”

1. What is it that we want our students to learn?
2. How will we know if each student has learned it?
3. How will we respond when some students do not learn it?

How can we extend and enrich the learning for students who have demonstrated proficiency?

“In the final analysis, building the collaborative culture of a professional learning community is a question of will. A group of staff members who are determined to work together will find a way.”■

ⁱ Learning by Doing: A Handbook for Professional Learning Communities at Work.



G.S Mugongo seeks to be a place of comfort

G.S Mugongo is a 12 Years Basic Education school in Mudende sector, Rubavu district, Western province. Since its creation in 1962 with only one classroom, the school has expanded to 17 classrooms to accommodate over 2,000 students.

The school did not have a written vision and mission until 2015, when the school leader attended a diploma course in Effective School Leadership organised by VVOB, Rwanda Education Board and the University of Rwanda-College of Education:

- The vision of the school is to make it a “place of comfort aimed at making students competent and responsible citizens”.
- The mission states that “in partnership with all stakeholders we’re committed to create a conducive environment in which well trained and intrinsically motivated staff members provide all students with education that meets their needs.”

The school fosters collaboration with all stakeholders and partners as a key ingredient to achieving their goals. In this article, the Deputy Head Teacher Ezechiel Nsekanabanzi, describes how collaboration works at G.S Mugongo and highlights achievements.

Living the school vision and mission

The school management brainstormed and drafted a vision and mission, and then presented them during the School General Assembly for review and approval. Once approved, the school management discussed how to stimulate ownership of the vision and mission in the wider school community to achieve them together.

“We took our time to share the



“Everyone understands that each small step we take is part of the wider picture and inspired by our vision and mission.”

new vision and mission with our students using teachers as our messenger, at students’ assemblies and on notice boards,” Mr. Nsekanabanzi said. “We also refer to our vision and mission during parents’ meetings because we want everyone to be aware of the direction the school is taking. Students now know the school vision and mission

statements even by heart. Everyone understands that each small step we take is part of the wider picture and inspired by our vision and mission.”

Performance meetings

In its endeavours to make the school a place of comfort for students to become competent and responsible citizens, the school management discusses student performance with teachers and provides constructive feedback regularly.

How does this work?

At the end of every school term and year, the deputy head teacher prepares a chart that shows students’ performance in each class. The chart clearly highlights the percentage of students below and above the average. This is done for both the yearly national examination results and students’ academic performance at the end of every term.

Performance chart sample (teachers' names were changed)

Class.....School year & term.....				
Subject	Total students	Success (scored 50 and above)	Percentage of success	Teacher
Maths	48	30	62.5%	Mathew
Chemistry	50	12	24%	Alex
English	58	55	95%	Claudine

A meeting with all teachers is then organised at the beginning of the next school term and/or year where the best performing teachers share tips that made students perform well in their lessons. Moreover, these teachers are appreciated and rewarded with small gifts as a way to encourage them to maintain and even improve their best practices.

Based on the results presented in the performance chart, teachers whose students performed poorly share possible reasons. The purpose is to advise those teachers about identified challenges. For instance, mentoring and coaching sessions might be planned with the Deputy Head Teacher or a mentor teacher. Assistance is also provided within respective departments.

"This serves as a peer learning session. We don't blame low performing teachers, rather we encourage and support them to improve," said Mr. Nsekanabanzi.

According to Nsekanabanzi, this tactic enhances self assessment and a competitive spirit, and helps teachers to identify their strengths and weaknesses.

"Students also become more motivated when teachers adopt a new/innovative teaching approach, such as encouraging students' participation or using new teaching aids," said Mr Nsekanabanzi.

Committed school leader

For Mr Nsekanabanzi, one of the major factors that makes collaboration more viable is the commitment of the Head

Teacher to work with staff members in a friendly way, by listening to their challenges and advising accordingly.

"Sometimes our Head Teacher facilitates coaching sessions. He also organises sessions whenever he finishes a training, to share new skills or innovative approaches. This motivates teachers and enhances collaboration in our school," Mr Nsekanabanzi.

Recognition motivates teachers

Jean de la Croix Kuradusenge, 45, rides his bicycle 20 kilometres every working day to teach at G.S Mugongo. He has done so for the last 17 years. Good collaboration with the school authorities and his colleagues, as well as being recognised for his commitment to teaching, has kept him happy in the teaching profession.

"I've always been recognised as one of the two most dedicated and well-performing teachers at my school. Last year, I was rewarded a laptop as the best teacher in Mudende sector, then as one of 12 best performing teachers in Rubavu district. Some of the selection criteria include dedication, punctuality, learning outcomes, attendance, motivating students to love school, improving one's socio-economic welfare, among other things. Being appreciated by the school management, sector leaders and district officials before my colleagues gives me pride, courage, and assurance that my choice to teach was the best."

Working with parents

The school holds a Parent Teacher Assembly once every term to discuss various issues. These include school dropout, students' absenteeism and student discipline. Additionally, the School General Assembly Committee (SGAC) works with the school to identify and discuss issues related to teaching and learning.

Mr Nsekanabanzi explains: *"We involve the SGAC in the development of our School Improvement Plan, so they're aware of every school activity. We work in a transparent way to gain trust and support from parents. Having a SGAC that understands its role and responsibilities strengthens our working relationship with parents."*

Resolving disciplinary problems together

At one SGAC meeting with the school management, the participants identified the need for a school fence as one of the solutions to students' disciplinary problems.

"Some students would skip class and wander around retail centres near the school. Others went home earlier than allowed," Mr. Nsekanabanzi explained.

The issue was later presented to the school general assembly. *"We first discussed what it would take to build the fence. We found that volcanic rocks were locally available. We only needed to carry them to the school to make a wall."*

Parents accepted to contribute 500 francs per student per term, while parents living near the school supported the project by carrying stones on Umuganda monthly community work. The school also worked with the village, cell and sector leaders to mobilise the community members surrounding the school. They accepted to lend a hand during the wall construction



G.S Mugongo: working with parents



Parents and community members contributed to build the school fence using volcanic rocks available in abundance in this area.

on Umuganda as well. The construction started in 2015, and the fence is now at 80 per cent of completion.

"This is the result of involving parents and the community in the development of the School Improvement Plan," Mutabeshya Celestin, the school Head Teacher said.

Building relationships with the community

The school management believes that working with the community benefits the school in many ways. Therefore, the school strives to maintain good relationship with the surrounding community.

"We collect more rain water than we need in our six water tanks. We know our neighbouring community needs water during

dry season, so we give them some. We also give them free access to internet," Mr Nsekanabanzi explains.

"A lot has changed since we started this. Some unknown people from the community used to destroy school property like windows, doors, water taps. But since we started involving our community in the school activities we haven't had any incident."

Today, the school scored best of the Mudende sector in the 2016 and 2017 Primary Leaving Examinations with an average pass rate of over 95 per cent. For the O' Level National Examination, over 50 percent of students were admitted in schools of excellence in 2016. The school management believes this is the result of effective collaboration within and outside the school. ■

Tips for effective collaboration

- Creating the school vision and mission together ensures ownership and commitment towards achieving them.
- Having a School General Assembly Committee that clearly understands its role and responsibilities enhances collaboration.
- Involving parents in the development and implementation of the School Improvement Plan helps to achieve objectives.
- Clarifying staff members' roles and responsibilities helps to move forward fast.
- Appreciating and rewarding good performing staff members motivates and encourages others to learn from best practice.
- Do not blame low performing teachers and students, rather support them to improve.
- Encourage self-evaluation among teachers and other staff members.
- Create a feedback mechanism where students can share ideas about teaching and learning. ■

Do you want to be an inclusive school? COLLABORATE!



Head Teacher Sister Marie Cr  scence Uwarurema

We are Group Scolaire Rosa Mystica in Kamonyi District, Gacurabwenge Sector. We have 847 students from nursery to secondary. We are an "inclusive learning family school" and the Center for Inclusive Education in Kamonyi District. This year, we have 65 students with a disability and various special needs.

Our background

We were founded by the Community of Les Soeurs Bernardines, a Catholic nuns' community. We believe each unique person deserves a chance. That's why we started a centre for children with disabilities which we later expanded into Groupe Scolaire Rosa Mystica. In our community, there were many children with disabilities. They were a shameful burden to their families. Instead of being cherished and looked after as every child, regardless of disabilities, should be, they were locked up in their houses and, in most cases, mistreated and exposed to all kinds of violence. Many parents did not understand that children with disabilities have the same needs and rights as any other child. We are working

with the community and local leaders to change that mindset and teach parents to educate, love and explore all the innumerable potentials that children with disabilities have.

Our approach

Each year, we receive new students with disabilities and we do not have separate classes for them. Our secret to meeting their educational needs is collaboration, and this happens at different levels, including and not limited to:

1. The school body, i.e. school administration, teachers, support staff and students
2. The community, i.e. the parents of our children, the general community members and other schools

varies from a month to a year. These goals are not necessarily academic, they can be social, e.g. greeting other people, looking people in the eye, or just sitting with others in the dining hall. They can also be intellectual goals, e.g. staying still for 10 minutes, memorizing their name, etc.

- A plan for the parent's involvement. If we taught a child to feed themselves for example, and at home the parents or siblings feed them, we would be wasting time. Parents are as much involved in the growth of their children, and we have weekly assessments with them on our target and how we can make it owned by everyone.

Once we have an IEP, we work together as a school to meet each child's needs. This includes:

a. Regular trainings: we adapt our approaches to our children's needs and update our knowledge of the most efficient strategies. We understand that there's no such thing as a one-size-fits-all strategy in an inclusive school, which means we must keep learning. The training facilitators are sourced both internally and externally.

b. Flexibility: it rarely happens that you teach your lesson exactly the way you planned it. We are very open to adapting to our students' needs and moods. This might require spending a big part of the day on the playground, while ensuring that the learning targets of the day are met.

c. Leaning on each other: everyone at the school is committed to making sure our children with disability have a great time and receive a lot of love. We love hugging and dancing and we laugh A LOT! Our students play an important role in this. For example, you will never see a teacher pushing a wheelchair or cleaning them up. Their classmates enjoy these tasks. They know that children with disabilities are able, and they help us to discover their talents. In August we had a paid concert where our kids – both with disabilities and not – performed different things and we

“In August we had a paid concert where our kids – both with disabilities and not – performed different things and we raised Rwf126,000.”

3. local leaders and other partners

1. Collaboration at school level

When a child first joins the school, we sit with the parents and fill out a child's identification form. This informs us of the child's overall condition. Building on that, we develop what we call "an Individual Education Plan (IEP)" that includes:

- A goal for the child's educational need. Depending on the child's condition, the time line for the goal



Do you want to be an inclusive school?



Everyone treats children with disabilities with love and kindness at G.S Rosa Mystica.

raised Frw126,000. We are investing this money in buying more materials for the resource room and we are planning to organize such events regularly.

2. Collaboration with parents and the wider community

As mentioned above, we align with parents on the IEP. However, inclusive education requires:

- Resources
- Advocacy and sensitization

We work with parents and the wider community to develop children's special learning materials in our resource room. Parents divided themselves into small groups and they take turns to make the materials.

Additionally, we still have community members who do not value children with disabilities. Our parents and community help us source them out, advocate for those children and help change parents' mindset.

3. Collaboration with local leaders and other partners

In addition to our collaboration with the community and at school level, we acknowledge that we cannot accomplish much without the support of our local leaders. We work with them on the following:

- Facilitating knowledge sharing amongst schools
- Advocacy and sensitization

As a result of the local leaders' involvement, we have a peer learning group amongst Head Teachers in the district, and we can count on their support. For example, during *Umuganda* the local community built a dining hall for the school. Our collaboration does not end in our community alone, we have partners from different corners of the world, and our doors are always open to receiving even more.

Our challenges

Despite these support structures, we face many challenges. We are very proactive in identifying them and being *Intore*, we seek support to solve those too. Below are some of our major challenges and how we overcame them:

1. Being understaffed:

We have a big number of children to attend to, and that includes an even bigger number of children with disabilities. Being a government aided school, we do not have the means to hire as many staff as we need. Instead, we work with parents! They assist teachers in classes. This does not require any level of education as teachers guide them. Parents also help us in making materials in the resource room, etc.

2. Facilities:

We do not have enough facilities for adapted games and activities. To ensure

that our children have enough room to play and do their activities, we moved around their schedules and made sure they don't all break at the same time.

3. Trainings:

As mentioned above, we require ongoing training, but we have little time and resources. To address this, we:

- Organize trainings on weekends and during school holidays
- Promote peer-learning in a group of inclusive education volunteers in the district. The group includes an "itinerant" expert teacher in inclusive education who provides support to other schools in the districts.

Our recommendations

Inclusive education is possible, but difficult and costly!

We understand schools who think it is impossible to achieve, but we are a living testimony that it is achievable, through collaboration. We detailed our direct collaborators, but experience shows us that all these people come to support an existing strong and united team of teachers and school staff who serve as role models to the kids. In addition to collaboration, below are the additional elements that helped us grow into an inclusive education school:

- Believe you are the key for change and change starts with your own mindset.
- Education is a calling.
- Not everyone needs to be the next Einstein! Some children just need to learn their name, how to go to the bathroom or just be around people. Get to know your students' needs and talents.
- You have all the answers to meet your students' needs, though you might need support from others.
- Build a network. Parents are a source of mind-blowing ideas once you engage them.
- Connect with schools already implementing inclusive education. Live one day at a time, but plan for a whole year, assess and adapt regularly.

Thank you! ■

Boosting students' performance through COLLABORATION AT ALL LEVELS

New Life Christian Academy is a school located in Kayonza District, Eastern Province. It was established in 2001 by Africa New Life Ministries, first as a nursery school with less than 30 children, and later extended to primary and secondary education. Today the boarding school has over 1,400 students in nursery, primary and secondary and offers seven combinations, of which six are science combinations. Richard Kabanda, the school Principal, shared how collaboration within and outside the school community plays a vital role in school life.



Richard Kabanda

Collaboration structure

Mr. Kabanda leads the school as the general principal. He is assisted by two deputy principals who coordinate studies, and one deputy principal in charge of operations and administration staff. The school decided to separate responsibilities to simplify management while optimising outcomes. In addition to the administration staff, there are other units that make collaboration easier and more effective:

- Teachers are grouped in three departments (science, arts and languages),
- support staff (accounting and finance, maintenance and repair...),
- and a students' body that represents students in general.

The school also collaborates with parents and other partners and stakeholders outside the school like the surrounding community, local leaders, universities and higher learning institutions. The school seeks to effectively work with every group to improve the quality of

“we value our students very much, they're the reason we operate our school.”

teaching and learning.

Collaboration in action

The students' leadership body is made of 30 prefects grouped in departments to deal with 'small' matters related to studies (discipline, students' welfare, conflicts, entertainment...) that don't necessarily need higher authorities. Students are also

grouped in small units dubbed 'families'. Each unit comprises of 12 members and a group leader, and this makes collaboration easier and stronger, as Mr. Kabanda further explained. Issues that are beyond the capacity and powers of the students' body and families are channelled to the school administration through the discipline master.

The school also holds a general students' assembly every Monday after classes. It is an opportunity to reflect on the activities of the past week while planning for the upcoming one. *“These regular meetings help us to stay on top of the situation at school, and to not just intervene when there is a crisis,”* said Mr. Kabanda.

Breaking students' fear of authorities

In addition to the formal ways of communicating to students, New Life Christian Academy uses other approaches to build trust and strengthen relationships between students and school authorities. For



Boosting students' performance through collaboration

example, they organise joint sport activities such as football matches between students and the rest of the school staff. The authorities also occasionally join students in the dining hall and share meals.

"This demystifies 'the authorities' and creates a bond, nurtures trust between us and the students. We befriend them. Working closely with them also creates a sense of ownership of the school environment and property, motivating students to properly handle teaching and learning facilities. We do all this because we value our students very much, they're the reason we operate our school," Mr. Kabanda said.

For Mr. Kabanda, the ultimate goal of putting the emphasis on students is to allow them to participate in decisions concerning them. *"The students' leadership body is a channel through which students communicate to the*

school leaders easily—it serves as a bridge between them and school management," Mr. Kabanda said.

Collaboration through meetings

Regarding collaboration between teachers and the school management, every department holds a weekly meeting to discuss teaching and learning issues, including the ones identified by students through their representatives. These meetings can be led by the head of department, deputy principal in charge of studies or even the school leader himself. The operations department also holds weekly meetings.

Involving parents

A School General Assembly is organised once every term, for updates on the school improvement

plan. Furthermore, the school holds a monthly visit which coincides with students' monthly test results so parents get updates about their children's performance. On this day, the school management also encourages parents to give feedback on the students' test results.

Additionally, the school uses a computer programme to communicate students' academic performance to parents. The parent's contact information is kept in the software. The school can also send other alerts to a parent when a student is given permission.

Outside the school

The school works with different stakeholders and partners outside the school community. The school organises activities to support vulnerable families in the community in different ways. For



The students' leadership body deals with 'small' matters that do not need to be handled by higher management. Here a student presents a case to his colleagues for advice.



The school together with community members supported three poor families to build or repair their houses since January 2018.

example, students from different school clubs and local community members have been supporting three poor families together to build or repair their houses since January 2018. They contributed by making bricks during monthly *Umuganda* community work. *“Working with the community promotes a positive image of our school, and community members know that our presence is beneficial to them,”* said Mr. Kabanda.

Working with government institutions is also crucial to the school. “One way we involve local leaders is by inviting relevant government officials to facilitate discussions on important topics about high school and youth trends. Local government officials also give presentations about drug abuse, gender-based violence and reproductive health,” Mr. Kabanda said.

Partnerships with universities

The school builds collaboration with universities as a good stimulant to inspire and motivate students to pursue their studies at university

and higher learning institutions. Currently, New Life Christian Academy has partnerships with six regional and international universities. From time to time, the school management invites those universities for inspirational and motivational talks and career guidance for students. The purpose is also to create linkages and connection between students and universities once they complete secondary education, and the outcome has been positive so far: Many of secondary education graduates are eligible for admission to those universities. All 87 students who completed secondary education last year were admitted to local, regional and international universities, according to Mr. Kabanda.

The pass rate in Senior 6 National Examination has been 100 percent with good grades since 2015. According to Mr. Kabanda, this is a result of strong collaboration within and outside the school.■

Tips for collaboration

- Encourage positive discipline among students
- Befriend students and school authorities—build trust in students
- Establish students’ leadership committees to handle ‘small’ issues and make collaboration easier
- Recruit the right staff members
- Invest in relationships with the surrounding community
- Involve parents in the school improvement plan and update them about their children’s situation regularly
- Work with local leaders
- Create partnerships with universities and higher learning institutions to inspire and motivate students to pursue post-secondary education.■

#WhyITeach



“Spending the whole day interacting with students makes me happy, I can't imagine leaving such environment,” Ms Eleder Ntamushobora, a teacher for 18 years, Rubavu district.

“One of my Chemistry teachers was very encouraging, he inspired me to study and teach Chemistry just like him—and now my dream became a reality,” Mr Innocent Nsabimana, a science teacher since 2013, Western Rwanda.



“It's amazing to see your students coming to your home to say thank you after a long time when you were not even expecting it,” Mr Innocent Mazimpaka, a teacher for 11 years.



“Being with school children makes me feel younger, when we have fun and play together I almost become like them,” Ms Florence Nkurunziza, 15 years of teaching in Nyabihu district.



“When I teach I also learn—continuously updating my knowledge,” Mr Jean de Dieu Dushimina, a teacher for the last 9 years.



“One of my former students surprised me by volunteering to pay tuition fees for my daughter at university. I was touched and felt uplifted. Teaching rewards come in many ways,” Leonard Banyitire, a secondary school teacher for over 20 years, Western Rwanda.

“Many people admired my father because he was a good teacher. He inspired me to become a teacher, and I try to be a committed teacher like him,” Mr Anselm Ntakirutimana with 22 years in teaching.



“When I come across my former students in various services and get recognised, it gives me assurance that my teaching effort is not a waste of time. I feel encouraged to continue,” Ms Marcelline Uwizeyimana, a teacher for 19 years.



Five Reasons Why Kuradusenge Teaches

“I believe no one can ever regret being a teacher.”

Jean de la Croix Kuradusenge, 45, rides his bicycle 20 kilometres every working day to teach at Rubavu District, Western Province, Rwanda. Many of his friends have left teaching behind for other employment, but Mr. Kuradusenge has been happy in the profession for 17 years. Why?

Teaching affects almost every one of us and, for Mr. Kuradusenge, it's the reason he teaches today and why his students have continued on to higher education.

Imagine this kind of impact on a larger scale. If we consider that every teacher reaches thousands of young people over their careers, then investments in even one teacher can result in exponential gains in learning outcomes, particularly in disadvantaged communities.

More than 90 percent of countries across Africa face shortages in teachers for secondary education. And these shortages are getting worse. While the demand for secondary education increases, challenges, including teacher retention, remain.

We need to listen to teachers like Mr. Kuradusenge to understand why they teach, and work to recruit more passionate people into the profession and remove barriers to retaining them.

#WhyITeach by Jean de la Croix Kuradusenge, a teacher at G.S Mugongo, a 12 Years Basic Education school in Rubavu District, Western Province, Rwanda.

1. The teacher that made the difference

When I was in secondary school, we had a teacher who was very dedicated to teaching. He would pay much attention to our attitudes and behaviours and was very concerned about our learning, encouraging us to work hard to succeed in life. If something went wrong with a student, he would easily detect it, then approach him or her to find out more about the problem and advise accordingly. At some point, he would even contact their parents for further details and discuss a way forward. Since then, I started developing the idea of teaching. I felt I could also do the same to help children achieve something and succeed in their life. His attitude, advice, and encouragement made me fall in love with teaching.

2. Caring for students

A real teacher is dedicated and committed to help students grow, move from one level to another. Students are my friends, I always go back home happy because I have spent the whole day with my good friends — joking, laughing, having fun with them ... When I teach I feel like a brother to my students. So, I try to make students my friends so that they feel free to tell me their issues they have about teaching and learning. Additionally, I observe my students and when I realize that one is not following as usual, I try to find out why. Normally, when students feel happy about my lesson(s), I feel happy too.

3. Making a difference in the lives of students

When students succeed in life it is also my success as a teacher, and I feel uplifted. Their achievements boost my dedication and commitment to

teaching. However, when a student fails my lesson, I somehow blame myself of not having done enough. This is why I always feel uncomfortable to teach when some of the students are not in class. I first have to find out what happened to the students who didn't show up.

I once realised that one of my students in senior 2 had spent a month without coming to school. I decided to visit him, talked with him and his mother. His peers who had dropped out influenced him to quit school too, promising to help in finding survival jobs. I encouraged him to come back to school and he accepted. He completed secondary education and continued to university where he studied education. He is now a primary school teacher. When we recently met he told me, "I was completely lost, misled by my agemates, but you positively changed my life. I am who I am because of you. I have no reward for what you did for me, words cannot express how I feel. Your kindness is still fresh in my mind and will never leave. Thank you a million for being my teacher."

This is just one example, I can recall many other students whom I come across and express their gratitude, telling me that I will remain the important person in their life. It is a privilege and honour to receive such kind of feedback. It shows me that my job is worth doing. It also gives me courage and energy to perform even better to continue transform more lives.

#WhyI Teach



Jean de la Croix Kuradusenge

4. Earning a living through teaching

Many people say that teachers get paid little, but I believe that it all depends on how you manage what you earn. There are people who get paid far beyond the teacher's salary but still complain. For me, I make small project proposals and apply for a loan from Umwalimu SACCO, a saving and credit Cooperative for teachers, which I manage to pay back with my monthly income. I recently requested a 1.6 million Rwandan Francs (\$1800) cash advance for farming activities. My wife makes a follow up on the implementation of our projects. With small income generating projects I managed to build a house where I live with my family. I equally believe that my teacher colleagues can also improve their social economic welfare if they do good planning.

Some of my colleagues resign from teaching jobs, but a teacher's salary isn't the only motivating factor for teaching; there are many more reasons that keep us in the job.

5. Recognition is motivating

I've always been recognised as one of the two most dedicated and well-performing teachers at my school. Last year, I was rewarded a laptop as the best teacher in Mudende sector, then as one of 12 best performing teachers in Rubavu district. Some of the selection criteria include dedication, punctuality, learning outcomes, attendance, motivating students to love school, improving one's social economic welfare among others. Being appreciated by the

school management, sector leaders and district officials before my colleagues gives me pride, courage, and assurance that my choice (teaching) was the best.

I believe teaching is and will remain crucial in our lives, everyone who undergoes education has to meet a teacher in one way or another. Teaching is the source of knowledge in all fields. There is nothing better than becoming a light for others. I believe no one can ever regret being a teacher ...

Mr. Kuradusenge works with one the schools supported through the Mastercard Foundation's Leaders in Teaching initiative that transforms teaching and learning in secondary education across Africa so young people have the skills and competencies they need to succeed in work and life. Leaders in Teaching works closely with local and national stakeholders in African countries and focusses on teacher recruitment, training, motivation and leadership throughout their careers.

In Rwanda, Leaders in Teaching is implemented by several partners including VVOB—education for development, the African Institute for Mathematical Sciences (AIMS), and the University of Rwanda College of Education, in close partnership with the Rwanda Education Board. VVOB is implementing the initiative in 14 districts to equip school leaders, mentor teachers, education officers, and science teachers with effective tools and skills to lead schools, conduct mentorship and coaching activities in schools, to improve learning outcomes. ■



"Our students are great teachers"



Sister Philomene Nyirahuku

Ecole Notre Dame de la Providence (ENDP), also known as Karubanda, was founded as a girls' school in 1957 by Soeurs Auxiliatrices des Ames du Purgatoire (helpers of souls in Purgatory). Although there are some boys enrolled, the school's motto is to support girls' education. ENPD is known to be one of the best schools in Rwanda, but it has had some very challenging moments when students were under-performing considerably. To get back on track, the school has adopted many strategies including hiring great teachers, motivating them, encouraging them to consult the many books in the library, monitoring teachers' attendance and time management. But it wasn't until teachers started collaborating directly with students and facilitated peer-learning that performance increased drastically.

We asked Head Mistress Sister Philomene Nyirahuku, Dean of Studies Mr. Benjamin Matabaro and Head Girl Ms. Huguette Rugwiro how the collaboration at school level increased performance.

It is hard to believe ENDP has not always been a great school!

Head Mistress Sister Philomene Nyirahuku: (Laughs) Things haven't always been great. I served as head mistress from 1998 to 2007 and was

“Our mission is to raise a generation of girls who will lead our country, greatly contribute to its development and pass it onto the next generation. We raise them to be multipliers of knowledge and all the values worth a Rwandan woman.”

called for other duties before coming back last January. The school started off as one of the four social work's schools. At that time, schools were still being ranked according to the National Exams. Our name was never on the list, which really bothered me.

Another social work's school

however Ecole Sociale de Byumba, always managed to get a spot on the list. We sent one of our teachers, who is now our Dean of Studies, for a study visit to Byumba. Upon his return, he highlighted the main thing the other school did better than us: teachers were always on time, and they had great time management.

I was really eager to try anything that would help us perform better. We turned to teachers and students to get our school back on track.

First, we improved the time management of our teachers. Like Byumba, we initiated a sign-in book at administration and in each class. Students ticked off the time the teacher entered the classroom. Teachers were thus held accountable both to themselves and to their students.

At that time, we were in the process of recruiting our own teachers. We revised our recruitment procedures. Teachers would be tested in various stages and after the interviews, we would ask them to prepare a lesson, plan for how they would deliver the content during term and lastly, we would take them to class to monitor their interaction with students.

We hired some of the best, committed, hard-working teachers in the country. But still, change was minimal. That's when, together with the teachers, we turned our attention to the students. We were starting to get very discouraged until we understood this: kids speak their own language! All the knowledge that teachers pass on, students translate it into their own language. Once we understood this, we started pairing up students. The best performing students in class would get paired up with the last, the second with the second last and so on. We called the best performing 'matrons' of the least performing. In addition to this, we introduced the 'Golden Book'. In this book we would include a photo of the best performing duo(s) of the year. We start a new book every year!

Our performance kept getting better and better each year, until we ranked 1st in 2004. Now our target is to make sure every student finishes in division II at the end of Senior 3.

What tips would you share with other schools?

I have seen so many great Head Teachers who have many goals but if you do not involve your staff, you will never reach them. And believe me when I say that students are great teachers. I can give you hundreds of examples of former students who we thought would never complete their studies, or at least triple or quadruple a year. But once we paired them up with matrons they started scoring 70% and above.

Some other tips:

- Prioritize internal (non-academic) successes. It is great to be the top school in the country or district, but small successes are equally satisfying.
- Allocate enough time to students for revision and be there to support them when needed.
- Encourage and build a system for students' peer support.
- Motivate your teachers. We work with parents and the school's general assembly to provide awards for the best performing teachers. Last year, parents gifted a cow to the best teacher. They also decided to contribute to incentives for our teachers, however much they can.
- Set goals with teachers and students. Remember to be clear about each person's responsibilities towards achieving those goals.
- Build a system that promotes discipline and assists students to be organized. One of the strategies we use is to keep them busy.



To sum up, our success depends entirely on the collaboration between teachers and students. We empower students to empower each other, and everything we do is directed at empowering girls. Our mission is to raise a generation of girls who will lead our country, greatly contribute to its development and pass it onto the next generation. We raise them to be multipliers of knowledge and all the values worth a Rwandan woman.

You empower students to support each other. Mr. Benjamin Matabaro, can you share with us the challenges you face in the process and how you overcome them?

Dean of Studies Mr. Benjamin

Matabaro: One of the most important challenges is that we have students from different corners of the country, some from really great schools and others from not so great ones. Every year, we undertake the following steps to get our students on the same level:

1. We fill out a student identification, which is updated every term. During this process, we get to know each child individually and assess their needs. We divide them into two groups: students with special needs and students who need general follow-up.
2. We pair them up with the more advanced students in class for exercises.
3. Then each lead teacher sets termly academic goals with the students, and they meet bi-weekly to follow up on the progress. The lead teacher updates the school

staff on this progress during monthly pedagogical meetings.

4. Lastly, we have a general assembly each Saturday where the entire school is updated on the progress.

That's amazing. I understand that students interact a lot with teachers, which is not very common in schools. How do you manage that?

Mr. Benjamin Matabaro: The real question is: how do we build healthy relationships in a girls' school where only 3 out of 23 teachers are women? Our main goal is not that all our kids get 100 percent on their tests, but that they are prepared for life after school. That's why our first task is building trust. We consider our students as our daughters, nieces or sisters. This helps us create relationships that are healthily balanced between tenderness and firm.

Ms. Huguette Rugwiro, what do you enjoy most about studying here? How did the school impact your life?

Head Girl Ms. Huguette Rugwiro:

The food! But also the unique way our school is structured. We are taught that we are empowered to empower others. We have many cool programmes that help us be successful in school but also prepare us for a great future.

My school has taught me 3 very important things, which I share with almost every other student here, I think. First, I believe that empowering my fellows is my duty. I was also taught to be self-disciplined, and to manage my time properly. I also understand the power and values of (being) a girl.■



Ecole des Sciences de Musanze: working as a family leads to excellence



Father Florent Nikwigize

“We’ve been encouraging a positive collaboration culture where students report their concerns to the right authority.”

Ecole des Sciences de Musanze in Musanze district, Northern Province, is a home to 280 girls and 436 boys. Father Florent Nikwigize, the Head Teacher, explains that this science school is referred to as a ‘home’ because it instills values and a culture of collaboration, just like a real family: *“We collaborate like family members where mutual respect is the guiding principle for everyone.”* As a result of effective collaboration, the pass rate is almost always 100 percent and most students get division 1 and 2 grades.

The school has three science combinations:

- Mathematics, Chemistry and Biology (MCB);
- Physics, Chemistry and Biology (PCB); and Physics, Chemistry and Mathematics (PCM).

The school has two departments, one for science and one for languages and social sciences. Teachers are also represented by two colleagues, a man and a woman.

Students are represented through the students’ council made up

of a secretary general and a vice secretary (a boy and a girl), a head boy and a head girl, students’ welfare in charge, and class representatives.

Students first

Everyone is involved when it comes to school planning. *“We use a bottom-up approach. We first consult with learners. They understand their needs better than anyone else,”* Father Nikwigize said.

Students give ideas on aspects which they think would make teaching and learning more student-friendly and effective. They express their views about teaching approaches, teaching and learning facilities and materials like the computer lab, laboratories, internet and books, among other things. They also voice their suggestions about issues related to their well-being, sports and leisure. Their proposals are then considered during the school planning meetings. *“We’ve been encouraging a positive collaboration culture where students report their concerns to the right authority,”* said Robert Ukwiyimpundu, the Deputy Head

Teacher.

In order to enhance collaboration with students for the improvement of teaching and learning, the school leader, the deputy head teacher and the discipline master hold a meeting with all students every Wednesday after class. During the meeting students are given the opportunity to ask questions and give suggestions on how to improve school life in general.

One of the ideas that emerged from such a collaborative meeting was the need for bread for students. The suggestion of students making bread themselves was discussed and adopted. The school then organised sessions to teach students how to make bread. Since then, students make their own bread every week, in rotation. *“This is 60 percent cheaper than buying bread from bakeries. It is also a way of exposing students to hands-on experience that can be useful in their life outside of school. They also learn how to use time efficiently as they do this activity without interfering in other programmes,”* Father Nikwigize said.

WhatsApp group for collaboration

Teachers collaborate among themselves and with the school management in different ways. For example, teachers have a WhatsApp group in which they share information and updates related to teaching and learning, and school life in general, on a regular basis. It is a channel for quick information sharing between teachers themselves and the school management. Teachers share a number of updates ranging from announcements to innovations from other schools.

"We found this way very effective as it complements other ways/means of communication with teachers and other staff members," said Father Nikwigize.

Supporting teachers

Teachers are happy that the school management values their ideas. For example, teachers made a suggestion regarding buying laptops for personal use for their professional development. However, they didn't have enough money to pay the sum in one go. The school then negotiated with a supplier on their behalf. The supplier accepted payment in instalments. Teachers could then purchase a laptop more easily. *"It was a great initiative. Teachers invested their own money in something that will also benefit the school. This shows teacher motivation and commitment,"* Father Nikwigize said.

The school also provides tea and lunch to teachers partially as

motivation, but also as a time-saving way to allow them to resume work on time. Furthermore, teachers receive a contribution from parents which also boosts teacher commitment. Parents suggested the incentive because they're aware that teacher motivation has a great impact on teaching and learning.

Working with parents

"We do everything together with parents," Father Nikwigize says. *"We share ownership of school issues. We meet regularly, but also share updates with the parents' committee through a WhatsApp group. We consider parents good collaborators who help us improve our school. When they understand the situation, they help us to overcome challenges."*

In 2010, parents came to the school for a general meeting and took a tour. As they were visiting different facilities, they realised that the school library (building) was in poor condition. So, they suggested to build a new one and accepted to contribute. Construction for the new library started in 2010 and costed over 90 million francs. Parents contributed 40 million francs over a period of four years.

"We don't hide anything from parents. That is why they trust in what we do," Father Nikwigize said.

Science for girls

The school management believes that they treat girls and boys, women and men equally. The school

challenges prevailing negative social norms that consider girls as inferior to boys. *"The students' council always includes a girl and a boy. We tell the students that girls are equally capable. We discuss gender issues during our meetings with students, among other topics. We have a matron who is also a science teacher. She sets a good example for girls to love sciences,"* said Father Nikwigize.

10 out of 24 teachers are women who teach sciences. According to Father Nikwigize, these women are role models to the girls. Girl students shouldn't fear sciences.

Student performance is generally high at E.S Musanze. The pass rate is 100 percent and most students get division 1 and 2 grades.

Father Nikwigize believes that this success is mainly due to strong collaboration-like in a family-between the school management, teachers, students, parents and other partners, based on mutual respect as a guiding principle.■



From top: students make bread (andazi) themselves as result of discussion with the school management; the Deputy Head Teacher Robert Ukwiyimpundu inside the library; the new library built with parents contribution.



Collaboration enhances professional development



Laurent Bushayija

Kayonza Modern Secondary School is located in Kayonza district, Eastern Province, and was founded in 1996. It started as a parents' school and later became a government school. It is a boarding school with over 1,000 students, 28 teachers and six combinations of which five are science combinations. The Head Teacher Laurent Bushayija explains how internal collaboration enhances the implementation of continuous professional development (CPD) and the quality of teaching and learning in general.

Planning together

The Head Teacher and the Deputy Head Teacher prepare a draft activity plan which includes a CPD plan. They present it during a general staff meeting at the beginning of every year. Teachers review the plan, provide input and make a final programme together. *"We do not give them a final programme without their thorough review,"* said Mr Bushayija.

The plan also considers students' views through a students' cabinet that consists of 14 members.

“CPD activities are organised to address various issues including those identified by students whenever possible.”

First, the school organises an induction workshop for student representatives to discuss their roles and responsibilities. For Mr Bushayija, this is an orientation workshop that focuses on understanding and identifying teaching and learning related problems, complementarity of the cabinet members, as well as effective collaboration with the school management.

"Once students understand how to present issues about their education to relevant authorities, it helps the school management to deal with the challenges in a more practical way. So, CPD activities are organised to address various issues including

those identified by students whenever possible," Mr Bushayija explained.

CPD implementation

Teachers meet through school based in-service training once every two weeks to discuss teaching and learning issues and share best practices. The four-hour training is meant to build capacity of teachers to improve teaching and learning processes in general to enhance learners' performance.

Furthermore, the mentor teacher and the Deputy Head Teacher organise a monthly coaching session as part of the CPD efforts to address some ICT issues in teaching and learning, students' participation, teaching methodologies with focus on the competence-based curriculum, and so on. Regarding the use of ICT, teachers work together to find teaching and learning resources online. The school has about 100 computers connected to 4G internet donated by Rwanda Education Board.

Teacher motivation

To stimulate effective teaching and learning, the school rewards best performing teachers with 'small' gifts. The selection of such teachers is mainly based on students' performance. The award was proposed by the School General Assembly Committee and was approved during general assembly.

Mr Bushayija believes that rewarding good teachers motivates their colleagues to work hard towards improving academic performance.

"We also motivate teachers in other ways to ensure the quality of teaching and learning. For instance, we provide tea and lunch to our teaching staff. We believe this benefits the school indirectly," said Mr Bushayija. ■

Collaboration

for the induction of new teachers



Induction is defined as 'a comprehensive, coherent, and sustained professional development process that is organized by the school, sector and district to develop, support, and retain new teachers and seamlessly progresses them into a lifelong learning programme' (Harry et al., 2005).

Teaching is a complex profession. Pre-service teacher education is rarely sufficient to provide all knowledge and skills necessary for successful teaching. Some things can only be acquired on the job. Moreover, many teachers still work separately from their colleagues. This isolation is especially challenging for new teachers (NTs), who are often left to "sink or swim." Hence, there is a crucial role for schools in providing

an environment where NTs can learn the craft and succeed as teachers. Induction programmes should therefore be part of a school-wide strategy on teacher professional development and teacher collaboration.

Characteristics of effective induction of new teachers

Mentoring is an essential component of an induction programme, but not sufficient as such. It must be part of a broader range of support activities. Literature shows that comprehensive induction includes the following elements:

1. Committed school leadership that promotes a developmental approach to teacher training;
2. Information-rich hiring

procedures that introduce candidates to the school's mission, values, resources, culture and community;

3. Orientation to school policies and procedures before school starts;

4. Opportunities to learn with and from colleagues;

5. Curricular support including the availability of complete curricula and resources; and

6. Growth-oriented supervision with transparent teacher evaluation processes.

If these conditions are fulfilled, induction transforms schools into good environments for all teachers to work and learn together. In other words: learning through collaboration with teacher colleagues.

Promoting effective induction of new teachers

Rwanda Education Board (REB), the University of Rwanda – College of Education (URCE) and VVOB are currently developing an induction system for NTs. In the process, the partners take into account research evidence, the priorities and strategies of the government of Rwanda, and other development partners in the education sector.

In this context, REB, UR-CE and VVOB have developed continuous professional development (CPD) certificate programmes for new teacher mentors (NT mentors) at primary and secondary level who are responsible for the induction of NTs. In primary, participants are school based mentors (SBMs) and mathematics school subject leaders (SSLs). In secondary, the programme is designed for, STEM SSLs and STEM heads of departments. The courses aim to equip NT mentors with the competences needed to fulfil their responsibilities related to CPD for teachers in general and for NTs in particular. With these

...induction of new teachers

CPD certificate programmes in Educational Mentorship and Coaching and with communities of practice for teachers and Head Teachers, UR-CE, REB and WVOB aim to contribute to the induction of NTs through collaboration between all members of the school community.

Proposed structure of the induction programme

The proposed 1-year induction programme for Rwandan schools involves different actors and levels. The key induction activities are:

- 1) Induction activities at sector and district level:
 - Introduction to induction programme;
 - Logistical support for accommodation.
- 2) Induction activities at school level

School-based induction

All induction activities organized within the school by NTs' colleagues:

- introduction to school's mission, values, policies, procedures and resources;
- visit of classrooms and staffroom;
- appointing a mentor to each new teacher;
- introduction to colleagues, learners and general assembly committee;
- providing or arranging for classroom materials including curriculum resources;
- communicating roles & responsibilities between mentor and NT;
- school-based mentoring: one-on-one mentoring/group mentoring;
- seminars/trainings on topics of concern to NTs;

- Communities of Practice.

Teacher Training College (TTC) support to NTs' induction

All induction activities organized within the school with the support of NT mentors from TTCs:

- observing a NT teaching;
- reviewing a NT CPD plan;
- meetings with the school actors to monitor the implementation of the induction programme and resolutions.

Challenges of induction

Induction of NTs is a new concept in our schools and it is normal that some challenges have been observed in the 40 schools where induction is piloted:

- Mentoring activities are not taking place as planned. Some SBMs are from the secondary section and therefore don't get enough time to interact with the primary NTs.
- In some schools, there are no particular induction activities to support NTs.
- The timetable doesn't allow

time for the SBM to organize and conduct activities.

- Teacher welfare, especially for NTs, remains a big challenge.
- In some schools, NTs are assigned to teach subjects for which they are not qualified.

Solutions to the challenges

• Stimulate school leaders to support the induction by allowing regular time for CPD, assigning lessons to NTs with consideration for their areas of specialization and provide opportunities for SBMs and SSLs to utilize knowledge and skills gained from the attended trainings in supporting NTs.

- Sensitize the school community on the importance of induction of NTs.

• Integrate the induction plan for NTs in the school CPD plan to facilitate its implementation.

- Create opportunities for sharing good practices between NTs and experienced teachers.

In conclusion, effective induction of NTs can only be achieved through collaboration among all members of the school community and with support from the TTCs.■



Education and school leaders share experiences on working together

In different districts, head teachers regularly meet in Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) facilitated by the sector education officers. Over the years, successful PLCs have been a platform where members come together to identify and find solutions to the most pressing issues in their sectors, without any external support.

“Collaboration is everything in education. An individual cannot achieve much in our profession. In Nyamasheke, we work together to set goals through our performance contracts. Everyone from our development partners, district, sectors and schools have their own responsibility towards reaching that goal. We achieve this with district education retreats, inter-sector study visits and communication through our different WhatsApp groups. Over the years and as we improve our collaboration strategies, we have seen increased ownership of the education sector at all levels,” said Nyamasheke District Director of Education Athanase Hamenyimana.



Below, SEOs and Head Teachers in Nyamasheke and Gicumbi districts share experiences on working together in PLCs.

What is collaboration?

According to the SEOs and Head Teachers, collaboration is a way to make work easier:

- A collaborative team is a united team and people trust each other more.
- Communication is fast and effective.

Why is it important?

- Leaders no longer “show the

way, but learn with their teams”.

- There is an increased ownership and accountability amongst team members.
- Everyone becomes a resource.
- New policies, procedures and resources are demystified.

Who are the involved parties in collaboration at school level?

The following people play different roles, and none can be overlooked:

- leaders at district, sector, cell and village level;
- administration staff (Head Teacher, Deputy Head Teacher,

Dean of Studies, Administrative Assistant, bursar, etc);

- teachers;
- students;
- parents and the School General Assembly;
- community members.

Each person plays an important role in improving the quality of education at school level.

What challenges have they faced and how did they overcome them?

1. Resistance to change
When they first introduced a collaboration in their sectors and schools, their teams would be distant because they felt as if they were investigated. They were not



Déogratias Uwimana

“As an SEO and a leader, you do not have all the answers and you're not a god! The sooner you realize this, the more you will fit better in your role of being your team's advisor.”

open to share challenges or best practices. To overcome this, the following strategies were adopted:

- building trust;
- start from solving the smallest matters and eventually people will open up more and more;
- be a role model.

2. Financial limitations

“Money is never enough! Especially in public schools, funds are limited, parents are not wealthy, yet the demands are so high,” Esperance, HT Byumba Inyange.

Seeing this is a common challenge to everyone, they suggested trying the following:

- Take advantage of the available resources. *“You cannot afford to pay suppliers for school feeding? Try getting parents to give Umuganda (support) in growing the food at school,”* Déogratias Uwimana, SEO Kageyo.

- Be creative.
- Opt for the cheap option.

“We usually think that study tours require going outside the country or to Kigali, but we organize inter-

school visits. That does not require any transport as most schools are in walking distance,” Athanase Hamenyimana.

Benefits of collaborating

- Facilitates innovation.
- Increases accountability and ownership.

- Facilitates knowledge sharing, even for complex issues like Public Financial Management, parental engagement, etc.
- Improves confidence of Head Teachers and teachers.
- Information is disseminated quickly.
- Teams are more engaged, leading to increased productivity.

Which recommendations and tips do they give to be more collaborative?

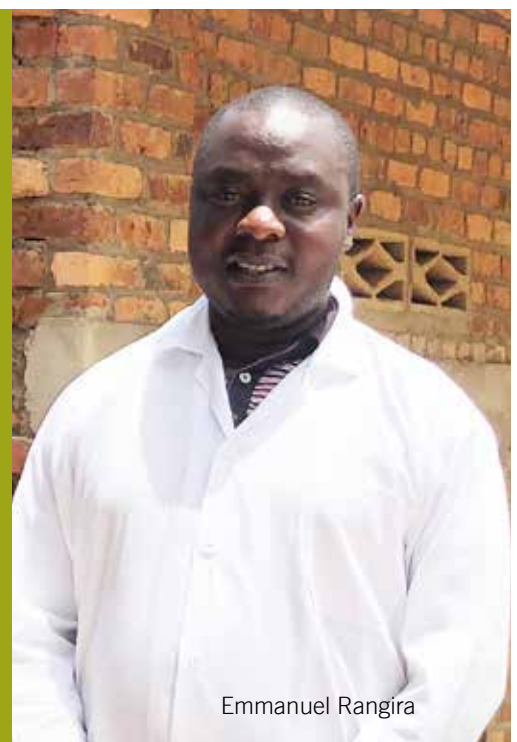
SEO Déogratias Uwimana, Kageyo sector:

“As an SEO and a leader, you do not have all the answers and you're not a god! The sooner you realize this, the more you will fit better in your role of being your team's advisor.”

Regularity is key. Do not meet your team only when there are problems. Build a culture and a system of keeping each other updated on what's happening in your area.

Keep learning. Some people will not know where to start, but through continuous learning, you

“Be the first to change. Your team will always look up to you, be conscious of your deeds, as they follow through.”



Emmanuel Rangira

will experience mind-set shifts and increased ownership.

Projects are time-bound, education is not. We are fortunate enough to have development partners, but they won't be here forever. However, you will still be accountable even after they have left. Take full advantage of the resources you have today, be flexible and open to learning."

SEO Jean Damascene Kwibuka, Macuba sector:

"Build unity. Nothing is impossible when your team is united.

Be accessible and a friend. Your team's growth is dependent on how they feel about you, whether or not they can be open with you.

Be a role model. Telling people to collaborate and showing them how to, are two different things.

Keep Learning. Organize small competitions, value trainings, recognize best practices, but whatever you do, keep growing."

Head Teacher Emmanuel Rangira, Saint Raphael de Rugano:

"Be the first to change. Your team will always look up to you, be conscious of your deeds, as they follow through.

Approach others. I hear many head teachers complaining that their staff does not open up to them. So I ask: But do you open up to them? You set the tone for what happens in your school."

Head Teacher Esperance Nyirabahire, G.S Byumba Inyange:

"Education is a chain. Update teachers on the new practices, update parents on what's happening with the school and their children, go for walks to other schools, etc.

“ Be accessible and a friend. Your team's growth is dependent on how they feel about you, whether or not they can be open with you.”



Jean Damascene Kwibuka

Communicate. Do not hold out on information and listen attentively, even to the little ones in the nursery. Always ask yourself, How do I communicate?

Team work. Build trust and ownership in everyone at the school starting with students, teachers, parents, etc.

Engage parents. They are an endless resource.

Build trust. Involve your team in setting goals for the school, be open to receive feedback, appreciate your team for work well done, encourage auto-evaluation.

Favouritism destroys the strongest teams. Treat everyone equally, with respect, love and trust, so they can do their job properly.”■

“ Education is a chain. Update teachers on the new practices, update parents on what's happening with the school and their children, go for walks to other schools, etc.”



Esperance Nyirabahire







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