

TEACHER SUPPORT

Concept Note on Promoting Effective
Teacher Support in Rwanda

June 2019



Rationale for Teacher Support

The quality of education depends on many factors, but teachers and school leaders are the two most critical sets of actors in raising it. Evidence shows that teacher development improves teaching and learning, and effective school leadership is required for the professional development of teachers (Robinson et al, 2008; Leithwood et al, 2008; Hattie, 2009; Glewwe et al, 2011).

Teaching is a complex profession and the professional development needs of beginning teachers are very different from those of senior teachers. It is therefore essential that teacher support programmes offer differentiated and needs-based continuous professional development (CPD) opportunities to cater to all teachers.

Teacher support starts with the induction of new teachers (NTs). Research (Ingersoll and Strong, 2011; Wang et al, 2008) has shown that quality induction has a positive impact on beginning teachers' job satisfaction, motivation and commitment; beginning teachers' classroom teaching practices; and learning outcomes of students taught by NTs. Induction programmes should therefore be part of a school-wide strategy on teacher professional development and teacher collaboration.

The baseline study of the randomised controlled trial (Cabus et al, 2019) on the effectiveness of the induction system for NTs, shows that at baseline only 54% of the NTs has a NT mentor, barely one in three respondents took part in a professional mentoring programme and two thirds has never had an activity that resorts to an induction programme. Although many NTs showed a positive identification with, and commitment to the job, first signs of motivational deprivation were also observed.

Once teachers are inducted their professional development does not halt. Throughout their teaching career, teachers continuously engage in learning and their professional development needs evolve (Steffy and Wolfe, 2001). Effective CPD identifies specific objectives as well as challenging and appropriate content. Several studies have explored teacher collaboration and mutual support as agents in raising teacher performance (Borko, 2004; Brodie, 2013; Darling-Hammond et al, 2017). Providing teachers with opportunities to reflect on their teaching and engage in dialogue about it with other teachers helps building motivation and commitment. Building on this, coaching, mentoring and peer-networking, are considered as the most valuable CPD-activities in raising the effectiveness of professional development, in ensuring the embedding of changed practice and enhancing the impact of professional development within learners' classroom experience (Harrison et al, 2006).

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Policy Framework on Teacher Support

The draft Rwandan Teacher Development and Management (TDM) Policy calls for a better link between pre-service teacher education and Continuous Professional Development (CPD), and a harmonized and free-flowing Initial Teacher Training/CPD teacher development system (MINEDUC, 2015). Improving the quality of teaching is a career long process. To institutionalise this ongoing process after initial training, REB has developed the School-Based Mentor Programme Framework (SBMPF). The support and guidance (including mentoring) provided to newly qualified, junior, senior and master teachers is about building the teaching profession, keeping them teaching and ensuring that they are part of a learning community focused on continually improving teaching and learning (Wong, 2004).

The draft TDM Policy states that: *“the key to retaining teachers, especially teachers in the early years of their career, is to provide a robust system of professional support that can quickly address job-related challenges and enhance commitment to teaching. All beginning teachers – defined as teachers in the first 3 years of their career, will receive systematic professional support from their head teachers, mentors and school inspectors specially trained for this purpose.”* (MINEDUC, 2017). NT mentors in school provide school-based induction¹, while NT mentors from pre-service teacher training institutions support this induction during the first year of teaching of a NT. NT mentors in schools include School Based Mentors (SBMs), School Subject Leaders (SSLs)

or Deputy Head Teachers in charge of Studies (DHTS). The TDM Policy further stipulates that teachers are encouraged to improve their knowledge skills, competencies and qualifications upon completion of their initial training through a structured programme of CPD and distance learning. Professional support is provided within the school, and by teacher education institutions. One of the TDM Policy Priorities reads: *“Require all teachers to undertake and record Continuous Professional Development, and ensure that an effective system for appraisal, mentoring, support, assessment, and re-licensing for all teachers is put in place to support it.”* (MINEDUC, 2015).

In conclusion, the Education Sector Strategic Plan (ESSP) 2018/19-2022/23 states that improving learning outcomes needs to be recognised as a national priority, with all stakeholders across the system being accountable to support the continual process of improvement and development that is required. Under the new CPD initiative, and with appropriate support, teachers, trainers and lecturers are expected to assume responsibility for their own professional growth as individuals and as members of a learning community. In addition to teachers’ responsibilities, District Directors of Education (DDEs), District Education Officers (DEOs), Sector Education Inspectors (SEIs) and head teachers need to be empowered to monitor learning.



¹School-based induction includes all induction activities organised within the school by NTs’ colleagues.

Promoting Effective Teacher Support in Rwanda

Focusing on the stakeholders at sector level and in schools, REB and the University of Rwanda – College of Education (UR-CE), in partnership with VVOB have developed and are currently implementing an induction system for NTs and a CPD support system for all teachers, based on researched evidence on induction and teacher professional development, aligned with the priorities and strategies of the Government of Rwanda, and in close consultation and cooperation with other development partners in the education sector (see figure 1).

CPD Certificate Programme in Educational Mentorship and Coaching for SBMs

The CPD certificate provides SBMs with skills to guide and organise school-based CPD particularly through Communities of Practice, coaching and mentoring and to promote reflective practice in their respective schools to advance the CBC implementation. It focuses on teacher development as an ongoing process in a teacher's career. All SBMs from 17 districts, some in primary and others in secondary education, will benefit from this CPD certificate between 2018-2020.

CPD Certificate Programme in Educational Mentorship and Coaching for Mathematics/STEM SSLs and STEM Heads of Department

The CPD certificate builds on the CPD certificate for SBMs with a specific application on STEM. SSLs and Heads of Department in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) are introduced to a variety of aspects of pedagogical content knowledge for STEM and STEM leadership, in order to mentor and coach NTs in STEM. Between 2018-2020, two STEM teachers in each secondary school (including 9YBE and 12YBE schools) of 14 districts will benefit from this programme. More than 150 SSLs Mathematics from schools with a primary section in 6 districts will enrol for the programme as well.

CPD Certificate Programme in Educational Mentorship and Coaching for TTC tutors

The CPD certificate is identical to the CPD certificate for SBMs. TTC tutors' support focuses on the induction of NTs only, but a thorough understanding of the CPD support provided by SBMs and SSLs is crucial. Additionally, the TTC tutors are provided with a focused training on how to support SBMs and SSLs on their induction of NTs and yearly organise three supporting school visits for each of their assigned primary schools. Between 2018-2020, 40 TTC tutors from 6 districts will enrol in the programme.

CPD Certificate Programme in Educational Mentorship and Coaching for SEIs

The CPD certificate is identical to the CPD certificate for SBMs. The SEI however focuses on coordinating educational activities at sector level in relation to the induction of new teachers and supports school leaders in the effective implementation of induction programmes. This support is provided through Professional Learning Communities (PLCs). All SEIs from the 6 selected primary education districts will benefit from this CPD certificate between 2018-2020.

CPD Diploma Programme in Effective School Leadership for (Deputy) Head Teachers ((D)HT)

School leaders are key in creating conducive school conditions for effective implementation of activities for teachers. (see concept note on Effective School Leadership)

Communities of Practice (CoP) in schools

SBMs and SSLs have a leading role in organising CoPs in their respective schools where teachers regularly come together to learn, inquire and reflect on their practice. (see Communities of Practice Framework)

By supporting SBMs, SSLs, Heads of Department and TTC tutors through CPD Certificate Programmes in Educational Mentorship and Coaching, and professional learning networks for teachers and head teachers, UR-CE and REB in collaboration with VVOB through its multi-year programme “Leading, Teaching and Learning Together (LT)²” aim to contribute to the enhancement of learning and teaching in schools. (see figure 1).

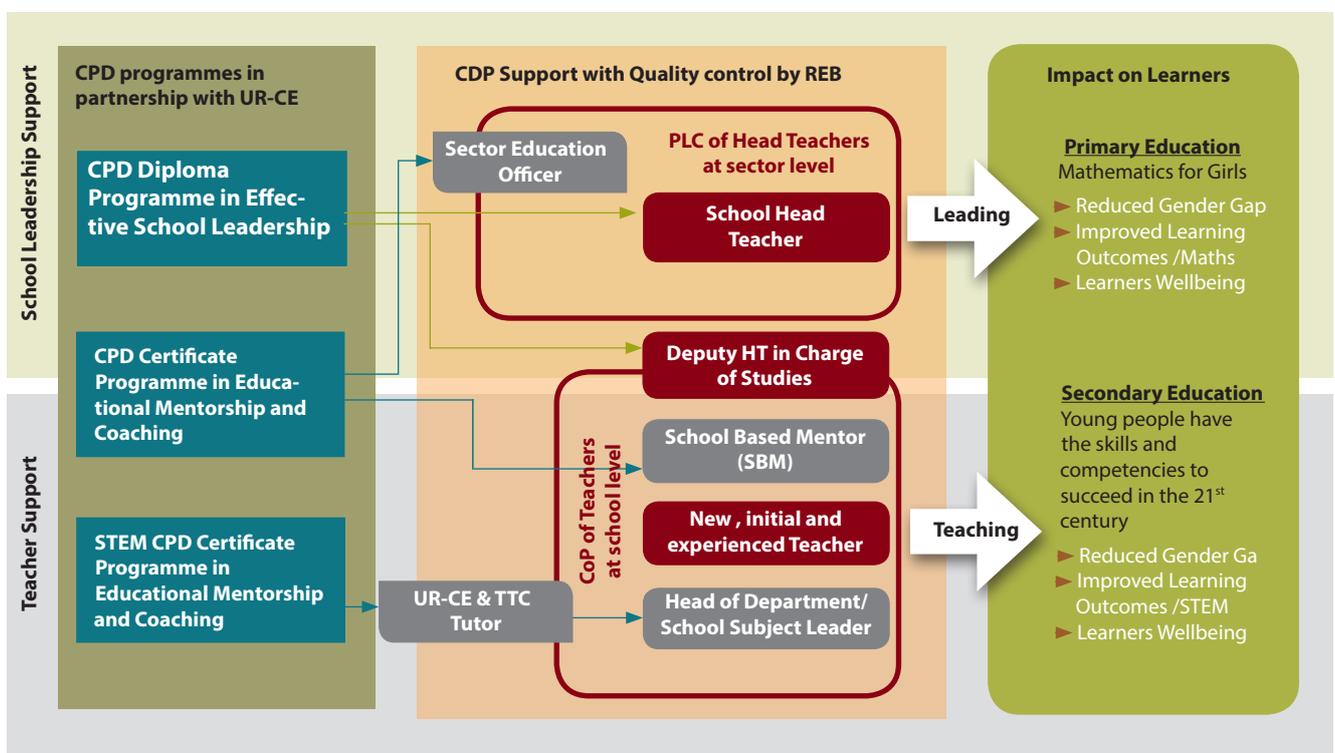


Figure 1: Overview of support to school leaders and teachers in Leading, Teaching and Learning Together (LT)² Programme

Assessment of practices

Assessment for the CPD certificate in Educational Mentorship and Coaching programme is competency-based. Different methods and tools are used to assess whether the SBMs, SSLs, Heads of Department and TTC tutors possess and qualitatively apply the competences (knowledge, skills and attitudes) that are intended by the programme:

- As part of their formative assessment, all participants in the Certificate Programme submit four assignments that relate the course content to the participants' practice and offer the opportunity to produce directly applicable output while demonstrating developed competences.
- Throughout the programme, the participants compile a CPD portfolio. The purpose of the portfolio is to document systematically all evidence of changes in the participant's practice as a result of participating in the programme. Secondly, the portfolio provides the participant with an opportunity for reflection on individual progress. It contains all documents and outputs that a participant creates during the course that show evidence of improvements in his/her practice. Such a portfolio is a requirement, under the draft TDM Policy, to award and renew teachers' 5-year licenses to teach.
- The Certificate Programmes include at least one field visit by UR-CE trainers to support participants in implementing what they have learned and providing them with constructive feedback. The Certificate Programme in Educational Mentoring and Coaching for SBMs includes two field visits, one supportive and one evaluative.
- The end examination verifies the participant's knowledge and understanding of the content of the CPD certificate in Educational Mentorship and Coaching programme.

M&E and research findings

The CPD certificates in Educational Mentorship and Coaching programme are monitored and evaluated (M&E) on three of the levels following the Kirkpatrick model (Kirkpatrick, 2015): Reaction, learning and behaviour (see concept note M&E and research). This includes participatory evaluations after each training session, telephone interviews with a sample of participants halfway the training programme, pre and post Knowledge Attitude and Practices (KAP) surveys, monitoring visits, and a Randomised Controlled Trial (RCT) that assesses the effectiveness of the induction system for NTs at school-level.

Pre- and post KAP surveys with the first cohort of SBMs and SSLs from primary education show that after the training programme, both SBMs and SSLs have more knowledge and a better understanding of their roles and tasks, and they report to organise more mentoring activities for both new teachers and experienced teachers. Among SSLs, need for competence, one of the drivers of job satisfaction and motivation (Van den Broeck et al., 2016) is more fulfilled after the training programmes than before.

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